

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

CLIVE H LANDA

MIDDLE MANAGERS' ROLE IN ORGANIZATIONAL
COMMITMENT
AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOURS

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

DBA THESIS
Academic Year 2010-15

Supervisor: Dr Noeleen Doherty

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Abstract

“Any motivated behavior, either preparatory or consummatory, must be understood to be a channel through which many basic needs may be simultaneously expressed or satisfied. Typically an act has more than one motivation.” (Maslow 1943, p.370)

Written before organizational behaviour had been named let alone studied as a separate discipline, Abraham Maslow warned of the dangers of assuming that an individual behaviour can be explained simply by a single motivation. This dissertation will argue that where organizations operate in the context of continuing downsizing over long periods it is necessary to consider more than just positive affect employee motivations, such as organizational commitment. It may also prove important to consider more ambivalent motivations such as those involved in impression management.

Since the early days of organizational behaviour researchers have sought to explain the degree of attachment shown by workers towards their organization. A great deal has been learned regarding two related constructs, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviours. This research contributes to the theoretical framework underlying these two constructs.

Empirical studies have shown associations between organizational commitment and aspects of an organization's culture, for example organizational values and vision/mission. The underlying process has been explained by use of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Similarly, studies have shown an association between organizational citizenship behaviours and two other constructs besides organizational commitment, the individual's perception of support from the organization and from the individual's manager respectively.

The resulting, widely accepted, models explain citizenship behaviours through two 'pathways', one via support from the organization, the other via support from their manager. Provision of such support is met by positive reciprocation by the individual.

The research reported here assumes that any relationship between an individual employee and their organization may, and is likely to, be influenced by the actions of their direct report manager. A systematic literature review showed comparatively little research into the role of the manager and his/her role in influencing organizational commitment. This led to two empirical studies of middle managers' role in influencing organizational commitment in their teams. Throughout this thesis the term middle manager is used interchangeably with direct report manager or line-manager. These terms are expressly taken to exclude both senior managers (those in a position to determine or contribute significantly to organizational level factors e.g. vision/mission and HR policies) and the first line supervisor with only task and team leader responsibilities.

The first study found that the managers in the sample preferred the term engagement to commitment and that they focused largely on those citizenship behaviours of their direct reports that contributed directly to major performance measures i.e. key performance indicators.

The second study in a different organization set out to explore whether or not this finding was repeated and irrespective of this, what techniques if any the managers used to influence both organizational commitment and citizenship behaviours in their teams. In addition to repeating the use of qualitative methods this study also incorporated some quantitative methods (surveys) in order to identify the direct reports' levels of the relevant constructs.

While the survey results showed that levels of both commitment and citizenship were high, unexpectedly and contrary to current models, the levels of perceived organizational and manager support were low. This runs counter to the prediction of social exchange theory. Nevertheless, it is argued that the current data can be explained, if one adds a third pathway to the model via impression management. This in turn can be attributed to an individual's heightened job insecurity in times of downsizing and a consequent attempt to demonstrate one's value to the manager/organization. It is further argued that any citizenship behaviours that may arise from impression management may not fully exploit the potential contributions from individuals.

The techniques used by middle managers to encourage both organizational commitment and citizenship behaviours in their teams are reported and suggestions for further research are discussed.

Acknowledgements

The doctoral process contains a striking paradox, namely that the candidate strives fiercely to convince the examiner of his or her personal contribution. And yet any achievement in this respect is critically dependent on the help of others. In my case I have been the recipient of uncountable generosity from a large number of people and I thank them all. The brevity of these few sentences permits me only to mention a few by name but the thanks are by no means limited to them alone.

The starting point for my appetite for learning came in my early school days and was nurtured by an exceptional teacher, Mrs Powell. The interest in doctoral studies dates from my first degree in chemistry. I confess that my response to the stimulus provided by my tutor, Prof Allen Hill FRS, was at the last minute to turn down the grant that he so kindly negotiated on my behalf. With the wisdom of hindsight, I now recognize that my response was in part associated with a fear as to my capacity and readiness to embark on such a challenge. Nevertheless the seed was planted.

Many colleagues in my business career have nourished my interest in what, over and above financial rewards, causes people to work fully and positively for the organization that employs them. My first boss, Alan Neale, holds pride of place in not only having taught me to be a little more self aware (and possibly less arrogant), but also in having embodied the skills and techniques for getting the best out of those in his charge.

Cranfield University has provided not only the location and resources for my endeavours, but also a gifted group of teachers and supporters that have encouraged me throughout the academic journey. First among these has been my supervisor, Dr Noeleen Doherty, who has somehow combined the ability to coax me along the DBA path with a deft ability to choose between leaving me to my own devices, probing me on my thought processes, and being available at short notice for consultation within a crowded research and teaching schedule. Thanks are also due to the chair of my panel, Prof Clare Kelliher, and members, Prof Donna Ladkin and Dr Colin Pilbeam, for their wisdom and encouragement. And I thought I knew how to ask questions ...

In addition to the fellow members of my cohort at Cranfield, many of my friends from very different walks of life took time out from their busy lives to assist me and provided both intellectual and practical advice. Finally, I happily acknowledge that none of this would have been of any avail without the steadfast and tenacious support from Sharon, my wife, who not only supported my initial application but also was unfailing in her encouragement throughout the years of study despite the intrusion on our domestic life. Thank you all.

1. Background

1.1. Personal interest

Nobody sensibly embarks on a doctoral programme without careful consideration. And yet few people do so with any prior experience of the time and rigour involved. In consequence the aspirations and motivation for so doing form an even more critical ingredient. To explain this writer's interest requires a brief digression into his experience.

Initially educated in the natural sciences, the writer took a degree in chemistry which was followed by a first job in the oil industry (where chemical literacy contributed to less than 5% of tasks) and approximately 20 years of management in what can best be described as running other people's businesses for them. There followed a further 20 plus years as a consultant, advising others on how to manage their organizations.

Collectively these experiences, and a full-time MBA from London Business School, provided some insights into the challenges of maintaining teamwork and cooperation within organizations. As a result an ambition developed to review and make sense of these experiences and insights, preferably in a disciplined setting. This led to an application for the part-time DBA programme at Cranfield and a very stimulating four years seeking to satisfy the ambition.

This chapter introduces the story of that journey.

1.2. Relevance of topic

Opinions differ as to when organizational commitment (OC) became of interest to academic scholars. For example Klein (2009) dates initial interest to the early 1960s, while Swailes (2002) traces its origins to the writings of both Fayol and Weber from the late 1940s.

What is clear is that prior to the 20th century, there was no need for a concept like OC. Workplaces were very different from what they are today, and the context was such that those employed in an 'organization' received little consideration. Even in the first half of the 20th century, research in the emerging field of organizational behaviour focused mostly on the design of work processes and organizational structures, rather than on the individual employee.

Thereafter, as the academic study of OC developed, in addition to the normal concerns with defining and operationalizing the construct, much focus was directed to employee turnover. Indeed, in one meta-analysis of OC, more than half the 100+ studies included either turnover or intention to leave as dependent variables, with 'attendance' a very distant second contender (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

By the start of this century, the focus appeared to shift somewhat to another presumed outcome of OC, namely pro-social or organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs). Thus, although overall withdrawal cognition remained the leading outcome of interest, and was included in 51 out of 155 studies in a more recent meta-analysis OCBs were included in 22 of the studies and came in second (Meyer et al., 2002). This shift may reflect further changes in the context of the workplace. Either or both of the impact of increasing pressure on organizations to reduce

employee costs by downsizing and restructuring, and the parallel necessity to obtain increased discretionary effort and improvements from the remaining reduced workforce can be expected to have increased organizational need to foster both OC and OCBs e.g. (Cascio, 1993; Kinnie et al., 1998).

Understanding how best to enhance OC and OCBs is likely therefore to be of value to both the academic and the practitioner communities, albeit for different reasons. Similarly employees can be expected to benefit from improved wellbeing associated with enhanced OC and OCBs. For example Rousseau (1998) discusses the role of deep structural identification (seen as associated with both OC and OCBs) in relation to benefits to the individual employee, “[W]hen a person acts to benefit an organization, that person can capture extra psychological benefits ... For example, helping an organization can make a person feel successful.” [Ibid. p 222]

A further reason for this research derives from the paucity of knowledge on the specific role of an employee’s direct manager in influencing OC, since most current knowledge relates either to the personal characteristics and dispositions of the employee, or to the policies, culture and other factors attributable to the organization and senior management. It is as though the employee’s direct manager is absent and treated as the proverbial ‘gorilla in the room’ (Simons & Chabris, 1999). Thus the prime research questions (see p 12) concern what if anything middle managers do to influence both OC and OCBs.

1.3. Map of the ‘journey’

An initial scoping study sought to identify the prime domains in which prior research on OC had been undertaken, Appendix A. This led to a systematic literature review exploring what was known about the role of middle managers in influencing OC, together with what methods were available to explore middle manager behaviours, Appendix B. Subsequently two empirical studies were devised and executed, providing information on what managers do to deal with OC and OCBs, Appendices C and D. The resulting analysis forms the core of this dissertation.

1.4. Signposting of remainder of linking document

The format of subsequent chapters begins with a summary of the research process in chapter 2. Next is a report on the research methods including reference to the underlying theories in chapter 3. The findings are described in chapter 4, followed by associated contributions and discussion in chapter 5. Implications for practice are contained in chapter 6, while limitations and suggestions for further research are in chapter 7.

2. Key constructs and research sequence

Before dealing with the research process, this chapter first considers two key constructs, OC and OCBs.

2.1. Organizational commitment

Although OC deals with an apparently simple phenomenon – the (affective) attachment that an employee can experience to his/her employing organization – the concept itself is complex. It is best thought of as an ‘umbrella construct’, “a broad concept or idea used loosely to encompass and account for a set of diverse phenomena” (Hirsch & Levin, 1999, p.200). Attempts to define the construct have continued over at least 50 years and it is not clear that a consensus has yet emerged.

Nevertheless, a recent attempt to unify thinking on the topic provides a useful definition (Klein et al., 2012). This describes OC as one type of psychological bond,

“This perceived bond is a socially constructed psychological state, differentiated from other bonds in that the individual does not psychologically merge with the target but does make a conscious choice to care about and dedicate him/herself to the target. More concisely, commitment is defined here as a volitional psychological bond reflecting dedication to and responsibility for a particular target.” [Ibid. p 137]

This definition will be assumed for OC except in circumstances where it is obvious (or stated) that an older definition is referred to.

A second issue with OC relates to the tools employed to operationalize the construct. Instruments have been developed to measure two of the older definitions, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) Mowday et al. (1979), and the Affective, Continuance and Normative Scales (Meyer & Allen, 1997). These have been widely used and much criticized e.g. Swailes (2002), in part because they conflate various components of the construct and are unclear on what exactly is being measured. One example, from the OCQ, seeks the respondents’ level of agreement to a statement concerning leaving the organization (an outcome of OC), another from the practitioner arena, Gallup’s Q12© survey, seeks respondents’ level of agreement to a statement concerning the organization’s mission/purpose making their job feel important (an antecedent of OC linked with an outcome unconnected with OC), (Harter et al., 2003). Any respondent with differing views on the mission/purpose of the organization and the importance of their job would, at best, be confused as to how to answer.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge ‘employee engagement’, a similar construct to OC. Developed in the 1970s, initially by consultancies like Gallup, see Harter et al. (2003), this has led to both academic enquiry and the use of the term by many practising managers to describe either the same or a very similar phenomenon to OC. This will be returned to in the discussion of research methods in section 3.3 and of managers’ perceptions in section 4.4.

2.2. Organizational citizenship behaviour

The idea of OCBs arose from an empirical failure – the absence of an association between job satisfaction and organizational performance (Organ, 1977). As Organ (2006) put it later, “By that

time, academic researchers had spent a quarter of a century chipping away at the popular belief that worker satisfaction affected productivity.” [Ibid. p. 15] He proposed that any such link would be more likely observed between contributions not required by the employee’s contract or job description. Or in other words, that a high level of satisfaction or affective feeling towards the organization would be more readily observable in voluntary activities towards helping the organization (and performance), than in better or more activity in the work required by the employment contract. This led to his definition of OCBs as, “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization.” [Ibid. p. 3]

Although there is wider agreement on this definition than on one for OC, there are, instead, several other related constructs that have much in common with OCBs e.g. pro-social behaviour, organizational spontaneity and contextual performance. One consequential problem is that:

“A careful reading of the conceptual definitions of organizational citizenship behaviour [X, Y, and Z] suggests that there are some important differences between these constructs, although it is not uncommon to see these differences glossed over, if not completely ignored. The danger in not recognizing the differences in these constructs is that the same construct may have conflicting conceptual connotations for different people. On the other hand, the literature also indicates that there are a number of occasions where essentially the same idea or concept has been given different labels by different researchers. The problem with this practice is that it becomes difficult to see the overall patterns that exist in the research literature.” (Podsakoff et al., 2000, p.515)

This latter difficulty is compounded by the tendency of different authors to sub-divide OCBs into different categories, for example by virtue of their target (OCBs towards co-worker, supervisor, organization). This confusion in turn leads to difficulties in agreeing on the operationalization of the construct.

In addition the context of work has shifted over time and some actions once regarded by both practitioners and academics as ‘discretionary’ are now seen to be an intrinsic requirement of one’s work. As with OC, these issues will be picked up in section 4.4.

2.3. Framing of the research

Starting from an ambition to understand better the challenges of teamwork and cooperation in organizations, it was decided to investigate the role of OC and specifically what the direct report’s manager did, if anything, to influence the level of OC. Accordingly a scoping study was carried out to identify the critical domains and what was already known about OC. These are summarized in figure 1.

The most notable finding was a lack of focus on the influence of the middle manager on his/her direct reports. Perhaps the best evidence of this was a review of some 58 longitudinal studies concerning OC (Morrow, 2011). Only two of the studies included the supervisor or middle manager’s role as direct manager. Despite a section labelled ‘interpersonal relationships’ that mentioned, *“Reactions people have to their leaders, supervisors, and co-workers would seem to be strong potential causes of [commitment]”* [Ibid. p 26], the subsequent discussion of leadership mostly referred to senior management and was then followed by other sub-sections on co-workers, mentoring and organizational climate. The focus on the supervisor/middle manager had vanished.

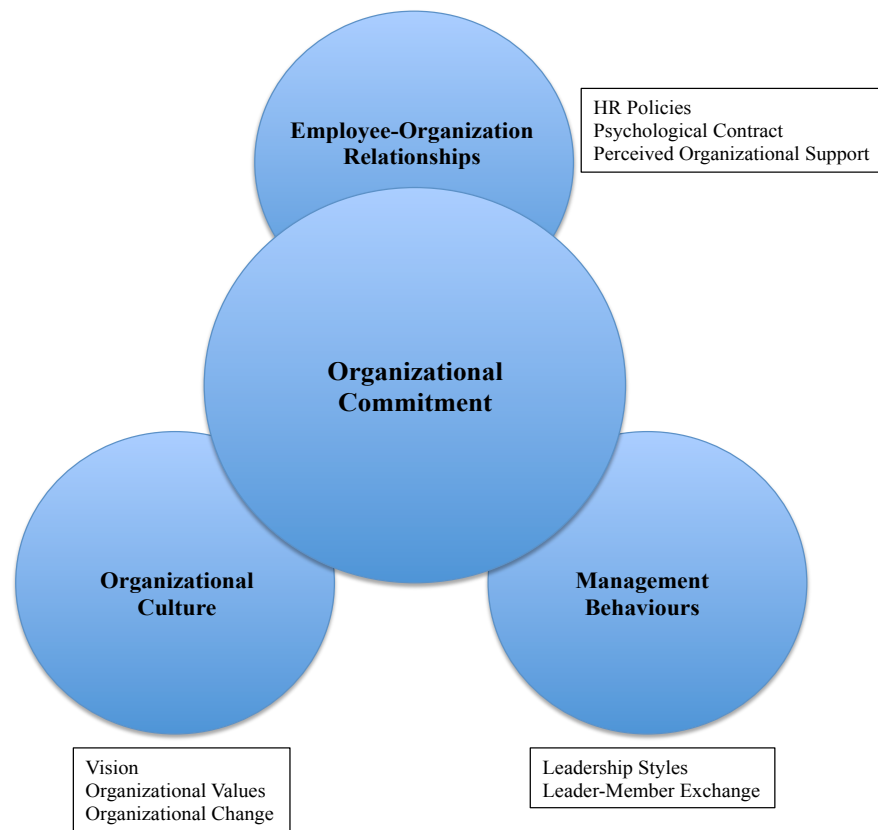


Fig 1. OC and the three key source domains from Scoping Study

The scoping study further suggested that OC remained a relevant construct and was associated with the effectiveness of change programmes (Meyer 2009; Grunberg et al. 2008) and confirmed that OC was a complex construct and commonly associated with low turnover and OCBs. Most factors studied or suggested as antecedents for OC were either related to personal characteristics or to aspects of the organization’s culture e.g. the company’s vision or values. The scoping study is provided in Appendix A.

These findings led to the development of research questions for a systematic literature review focusing on three topics: existing knowledge of middle managers’ actions in relation to OC; the theories underpinning OC; methods available to research middle managers’ influence on OC. The systematic literature review is provided in Appendix B.

The systematic literature review in turn provided the basis for two subsequent pieces of empirical research, the first in three European locations of one global organization, ‘York’, and the second in nine American locations of a different global organization, ‘Wilmington’. In each case the choice of organization was primarily designed to yield a sufficiently large group of middle managers (over 100) so that a sample (~ 25 – 45) could be drawn who spoke English and were located within an accessible geographic area (within a 200 miles radius). In York the prime focus was on understanding how middle managers describe and identify OC, in Wilmington the prime focus shifted to identifying if middle managers encouraged OC and OCBs and, if so, how.

There was no attempt to select the sector of the economy in which the two organizations operated, as the literature did not indicate any impact of sector on the study of commitment. While some research has been confined to sectors (examples include financial services, healthcare, petrochemicals, transport services and various manufacturers), this appears to have been a function of practicality and a wish to control for cultural and contextual variables. Reports on the two empirical studies are provided in Appendices C & D.

In the course of the first empirical study, interviews with the sample of middle managers identified a focus on OCBs that contributed to the achievement of key performance indicators e.g. output levels. As a result, the final research questions described in this document investigated how middle managers may contribute to their direct reports' levels of OC and OCBs:

1. Do middle managers look for and encourage OC and OCBs in their direct reports?
2. If so, how do middle managers do this, and is OC or supervisor commitment the more important pathway to OCBs?
3. Do middle managers focus on those OCBs most related to task performance?

The main findings of the studies contributing to this thesis are summarized in Figure 2 overleaf.

Study	Research Questions	Main Findings
Scoping Study	No specific RQs - Purpose to position enquiry into OC in the most appropriate domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OC best viewed as multi-component attachment between employee and organization - Key domains: Employee-organizational relationships, organizational culture and management behaviours
Systematic Literature Review - P1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do middle managers do that influences OC? a. What do middle managers do to represent the organization to their subordinates? b. What do middle managers do to support their subordinates? c. What theories have been used to explain middle managers behaviours towards their subordinates? 2. What methods are available to explore middle managers' behaviour towards their subordinates? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definitions of OC have lacked consensus for a good part of the last 50 years. Klein reconceptualization as psychological bond appears to fit empirical findings. - Very limited information on what middle managers do, some information on performance appraisals and trust/support from direct manager. - Antecedents include individual characteristics, interpersonal and organizational factors. - Theory largely based on social exchange (Blau), norm of reciprocity (Gouldner) while middle manager role requires consideration of agency theory (Eisenhardt) and LMX (Graen) - Most empirical work on OC based on positivist view and quantitative surveys. Qualitative methods sparsely represented and probably more appropriate to socially constructed phenomenon.
Empirical study of global food & drink producer (Europe) - P2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What, if anything, do middle managers understand by organizational commitment, and how do they describe it? 2. Whatever their vocabulary, what signs do they look for to assess the level of connection between their direct reports and the organization? 3. How do middle managers view OC as being influenced? 4. Do middle managers believe they can influence OC, and if so how? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Middle managers don't refer to OC or commitment, instead use attachment or engagement. Additionally they conflate outcomes when describing the phenomenon. - Managers looked for various signs to indicate attachment/ engagement grouped under 11 headings. Relatively few mentions of any OCBs. - Managers sorted direct reports into levels (some using Skill Will 2X2 matrices) and focused measurement on KPIs. Also distinguish between 'need' and 'desire' as basis for commitment and offered varied views as to how it was 'caused' and whether it was capable of change. - Most mentioned both formal and informal performance management discussions. - Referring to their attempts to influence commitment they mentioned assessing individual's needs, providing development options and responsibility, communicating/interpreting centre messages, offering recognition. - Referring to organization's attempts to influence commitment they mentioned predominately negative aspects; continuing changes and restructurings, inconsistency between external (investor) messages and internal (employee) ones. Emphasis on need to meet stretching KPIs and potential to weaken commitment, also on 'change fatigue'. Likewise criticism of both formal performance management system and annual surveys to 'measure' engagement (suggestions from several respondents of attempts to manage the responses).
Empirical study of global business services provider (USA) - P3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do middle managers look for and encourage OC and OCBs in their direct reports? 2. If so, how do middle managers do this, and is OC or supervisor commitment the more important pathway to OCBs? 3. Do middle managers focus on those OCBs most related to task performance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managers look for and encourage both OC and OCBs in their direct reports. Look for signs of 'attitude', of 'pride' and of 'learning'. - Managers employ a variety of techniques to 'manage' OC and OCBs, including maintaining relationships and awareness of each individual team member, encouraging initiative taking and 'owning' of projects, personal development and coaching, fostering a 'fun' climate, offering recognition and rewards, and communicating or 'interpreting' organization information. - They appear not to distinguish between different targets for commitment and conflate OC with OCBs thus making it unclear whether they hold any view on whether OC leads to OCBs. Only concerned that OCBs focused on task performance should be forthcoming. - Survey of direct reports show high levels of OC and OCBs are present but trust in the organization or in the manager are much lower than theory suggests. This suggests other potential explanations and particularly to employee use of 'impression management' techniques.

Fig 2. Summary of RQs and main findings of DBA research – Appendices A, B, C & D

3. Research methods

This chapter will describe and seek to justify the author's methodological approach. However, following Blaikie (2007) it will first deal with the philosophical and theoretical frameworks adopted (sections 3.1. and 3.2.), and also describe some of the current models of the constructs of OC and OCBs (section 3.3.) before concluding with the methodological considerations (section 3.4.).

3.1. Ontology/epistemology

It is a common feature of all the definitions and related studies that an individual employee can exhibit different levels of OC, both individually over time, and more particularly from their co-workers at any individual point in time e.g. (Meyer & Allen, 1997). It is further assumed that an individual's level of OC can be affected by the views of his/her co-workers e.g. (Klein et al., 2012). Thus OC, a 'volitional psychological bond', is not readily observable and will be based on the individual's conscious and unconscious perceptions, including of behaviours and views of both the manager and co-workers.

Thus OC is socially constructed. Indeed, even the perception and meaning of the target i.e. the organization will probably vary between co-workers. Coyle-Shapiro and Shore (2007, p.167) drew attention to this in their review of the employee-organizational relationship:

"In fact, if the organization is represented by agents as well as coalitions and groups, and depends on the individual employee's perception, it could be argued that each employee works for a different organization!"

This framing of the phenomenon argues for an idealist ontology and constructionist epistemology (Blaikie, 2007).

There are two additional justifications for this stance. First, previous research has overwhelmingly adopted a more positivist position. For example, in the systematic literature review (appendix B) quantitative studies outnumbered qualitative ones by seven to one. While significant insights into OC have emerged from the positivist viewpoint, it is likely that additional more nuanced insights will be available when OC is viewed through a constructionist lens.

Secondly, there are significant reasons to be critical of some of the positivist output on OC. Swailes (2002) provided a comprehensive critique including, among others, the following issues:

- Construct definition is unclear and/or too broad leading to ambiguity
- Antecedents and/or outcomes are conflated in the resulting operationalization of the construct
- Survey questions uniformly refer to 'organization' without attempting to identify what respondents understand by the term
- It is also unclear if the tools used to measure OC do so, or measure something else.

This last point is the general statement of the examples referred to earlier in section 2.1. There are echoes of this critique elsewhere e.g. (Klein et al., 2009). While it certainly does not mean one should ignore the output wholesale, it does argue for a cautious use of the results of earlier research. This current work is based on the more recent reconceptualization proposed by Klein and this together with its operationalization, Klein (2013), appears much less susceptible to the

above critiques.

3.2. Theoretical underpinning

Early in this research a helpful academic asked whether the topic was being examined from a psychological or sociological perspective. This turned out to be a significant and difficult question to answer. Perhaps the answer should be from both, plus economics!

3.2.1. Social Exchange Theory

Existing research invariably cites social exchange theory, that *“involves favors that create diffuse future obligations, not precisely specified ones, and the nature of the return cannot be bargained about but must be left to the discretion of the one who makes it”* (Blau, 1964, p.93). Blau expressly acknowledges the pedigree of his theory in the works of Weber and of Homans, both fellow sociologists. He also made it clear that:

“The purpose of the intensive analysis of interpersonal relations is not [...] for its own sake] nor is it to search for the psychological roots of human direction, but it is to derive from this analysis a better understanding of the complex structures of association among men that develop.” [Ibid. p 2]

In its original (sociological) form, therefore, social exchange theory appears not to apply to the context of OC, which is an employee-organizational relationship. This issue (applying theory in an appropriate context) was discussed in more general terms in a special topic forum in the Academy of Management Review (Vol. 36, 2). Oswick, Fleming and Hanlon (2011) reviewed the 15 most popular theories cited in the field of organization and management, and noted that only three originated there. The other 12 (80%) had been ‘borrowed’ from other disciplines and then ‘domesticated’; many were from sociology, somewhat fewer from economics and psychology. The editors of the forum noted that *“When we import theories from psychology and sociology, we also import core questions, assumptions, and metaphors, each of which has the potential to create blind spots for management researchers.”* (Suddaby et al., 2011, p.237). Applying a theory for person-person(s) interactions to a person-organization relationship is just such a potential blind spot.

The foregoing argues for additional caution when interpreting OC with social exchange theory. In particular, Blau is very specific in distinguishing his work on people and groups from work on organizations,

“The systematic analysis of informal processes in organizations and that of the formal structures of organizations, though the knowledge they furnish are complementary, are incompatible and cannot be carried out together, because they require entirely different theoretical frameworks and consequently different methods of enquiry.” (Blau, 1974, p.2)

Using social exchange theory suggests that as well as being socially constructed and different for different employees, the receipt of support and favors from the organization can and will obligate the employee/recipient to reciprocate by way of OC. While stretching the context for the original theory, it seems at least plausible that employees could regard their reciprocation of organizational support as part of a ‘relationship’ and obliging both themselves and the organization to continue it.

3.2.2. Agency Theory

OC assumes a bond between the employee and the organization (in common with other employee-organizational relationships e.g. the psychological contract). This not only necessitates

an assumption of anthropomorphism in respect of the organization, but also requires consideration of more than just the *organizational* relationship e.g. the employee with co-workers, with supervisor and with others. In this research the emphasis is on the relationship with the organization and the apparent omission of the role of the middle manager. For the latter purpose agency theory Eisenhardt (1989) provides an appropriate perspective. This posits that behaviours of agents can diverge from those desired by principals as a result of differing interests. The theory, imported from economics, has been adapted in what has been termed a social agency theory (Wiseman et al., 2012). This allows that the divergence between intended and enacted behaviours may be due to information asymmetry, rather than differences of interest (in this instance between senior and middle managers).

3.2.3. Impression Management Theory

Almost all the foregoing (and the literature) view OC and OCBs as positive in that both phenomena are judged beneficial to the organization and the individual. This perspective assumes that the relationships and underpinning processes are a return of favours for support received, i.e. a positive response, according to the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960).

Rarely, scholars have considered less positive scenarios. Meyer (1997) proposed a separate component of OC comprising the individual's need to remain with the organization because of lack of alternatives, termed continuance commitment. Klein's (2012) reconceptualization accommodates the same notion by proposing four different types of psychological bond: one is commitment. Another of the bond types, termed acquiescence, arises from a perceived lack of alternatives and is associated with indifference and/or psychological withdrawal by the employee [Ibid. Table 1, p 134]. This explicit separation of acquiescence from commitment is one reason for preferring the Klein definition of commitment and OC.

A critique of the incidence of OCBs as being not solely a result of positive and affective antecedents may also prove important. Bolino (1999) proposed an additional contribution to OCBs from individual attempts at 'impression management'. He suggests that OCBs may also be based on self-serving motives of the individual exhibiting them. He further offers a critique of the affective process used to explain OCBs and suggests that it may be difficult in practice to separate out the positive from the self-serving motivation.

3.2.4. Levels of Interest

As both the phenomena, OC and OCBs, involve one or more relationships (with the organization, with middle and senior managers, and with co-workers), there are several levels of interest that can be considered. In this study the prime focus is on the level of the middle manager rather than his/her individual reports who are experiencing the OC and exhibiting the OCBs.

3.3. Models of OC (and OCBs)

In essence, and with very few caveats, the literature maintains that OC is one of the key antecedents of OCBs, and that the latter in turn contribute to better organizational performance. Figure 3 brings together several of the conventional models of this linkage.

A second pathway to OCBs omits OC, and instead posits some form of commitment to the direct manager or supervisor as the mediator. The upper part of figure 3 illustrates this and associations with the employee manager relationship, using leader member exchange (LMX), Wayne (1997), and transformational leadership via trust in the leader (Podsakoff et al., 1990).

However, as well as ignoring the impact of possible negative mediators for OCBs (e.g. impression management referred to above), these models of OC and OCBs ignore another issue raised by scholars of engagement. The latter construct has been developed in part in response to some empirical work in the field of practice e.g. survey work by organizations like Gallup. Current academic views here are also somewhat disparate, starting with definitions. A number of scholars differentiate between the construct target, i.e. ‘work’ engagement and ‘organization’ engagement, Farndale et al. (2014), while others have distinguished between construct type i.e. disposition, psychological state and behaviours (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Irrespective of definition, some scholars view engagement as an antecedent of OC or OCBs or both. The models above take no account of this, in part because most research into OC has to date ignored engagement, while engagement research mostly views OC as an outcome of engagement.

In summary there are three concerns about the measurement of OC and OCBs: self-reporting and issues of common variance; the tools used to operationalize the constructs; and the statistical implication of results e.g. association versus correlation versus causation, and non-controlled variables. In addition there is an unresolved debate over whether or not engagement and OC are distinct constructs (Guest, 2014). These factors suggest a need for further caution in adopting the current models. Nevertheless, the research here is based on the initial assumption of some relationship between OC and OCBs.

3.4. Methodological considerations

The preceding analysis of philosophy, theory and models explains the choice of qualitative methods to explore the selected research questions. However, the choice of middle managers as the prime level of interest limits the use of some qualitative methods, notably ethnographic studies or direct observation, as these require continuing and prolonged access to the subjects. This is not often practical with middle managers and therefore a mix of semi-structured interviews was selected. These were chosen to permit the researcher to probe or clarify managers’ views at the time of their interviews, a process not readily available using some other methods. In addition in the first piece of empirical research a personal diary/journal completed by the manager was also used as this had been shown to provide useful data (Balogun, 2003).

Each piece of empirical research used a single organizational context (companies ‘York’ and ‘Wilmington’ respectively) as the source of the middle manager samples. This was done in an attempt to hold constant known antecedents of OC (including HR systems, organizational culture and values) so that variations that might be attributable to the middle managers in the sample would be more discernible.

In the first piece of empirical research, P2, the invitation to the initial interviews did not refer to either OC or engagement. One reason was that HR departments within organizations regularly use the label ‘engagement’ to refer to the positive attachment to the organization exhibited (or not) by their employees. The neutral approach adopted in the initial P2 interviews does not require that one take a view on whether OC and engagement are distinct constructs. Instead, the design allowed the researcher to learn more about respondents’ schema and terminology for any attachment they might observe, without assuming common understanding of a particular term.

This is perhaps best termed a grounded approach, but was specifically not employing grounded theory; the latter involves minimal assumptions and an iterative process for developing theory. In this research the theoretical underpinning outlined earlier assumed some association between OC and OCBs while remaining open minded as to its form or direction.

One-to-one semi-structured interviews were used at the start of P2 in York, because the prime interest at this stage was in the York managers' individual views (group interviews would have risked dilution or influence of one individual's views by another participant).

A further component of P2 was a journal to allow interviewees to note observations of OC that they might see over the ensuing four to five weeks. A second set of interviews took the form of predominantly paired interviews. Using their own examples as a starting point for the conversations, the focus was on what the managers sought to do to influence their direct reports' levels of OC. Interaction between participants was welcome as a check on their accuracy/honesty and as a means of allowing conversations to develop without the researcher's participation.

The use of paired depth interviews is uncommon in management research. The method has been used more in healthcare/medical and sociological research; for a summary of the approach see (Arksey, 1996). The main benefits anticipated for paired (rather than one-to-one) interviews included reducing interviewee tension, drawing on underlying beliefs of participants, Ungar (2006), and development of one participant's comments by the other, leading sometimes to fresh themes or clearer explanations (Taylor & de Vocht, 2011). Details of the method are shown in Appendix C.

In the second piece of research, P3, the focus remained on the middle manager, while the topic was expanded to include both OC and OCBs, in part because of the findings in P2 relating to OCBs and to managers giving priority to only those OCBs connected with KPIs.

The P3 management sample, drawn from Wilmington, a US based company, were first surveyed and then interviewed. The direct reports of the managers were also invited to complete a survey seeking their levels of OC and OCBs together with data on their perception of support from the organization and from their direct manager. The survey tool was introduced as a means of subsequently sub-dividing the manager sample into those with teams showing higher OC and/or OCBs from those with lower scoring teams; and secondly, to avoid any common method variance in relation to the OCB scores.

A mix of one-to-one and paired depth interviews was again employed with the Wilmington managers, building on the benefits perceived from the experience of P2.

Establishing reliability and validity in research comprising qualitative methods such as interviews is not straightforward. Some take the view that in essence the results should be believable (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). This merely re-labels the problem. Another approach Morse et al. (2008) argues for methodical coherence and ensuring for example that the questions used match the method employed. There is also a heavy emphasis on transparency in sample generation, interview content, and analysis of the results.

Details of the interview protocols, interview methods and the coding are contained in the respective appendices C and D. Here it is worth noting that the two organizations used in the research were previously unknown to the researcher (as were the HR personnel and managers in

the resulting samples). Both were introduced by third parties and received along with other possible organizations a common briefing note to outline the project.

As mentioned previously (p 11) the main criteria for selection was the availability of a sufficient pool of middle managers. Together with the HR personnel of York and Wilmington, the samples of middle managers were selected from a list of those not in the top two tiers of managers or in HR or strategic roles (to exclude those able to influence policy matters). Selection from that list was partly geographical and partly to represent a wide cross section of functions or disciplines.

4. Findings

The most striking finding of this research comes not from the managers interviewed, but from the survey of perceptions of their direct reports. In Wilmington despite low levels of support from their managers and their organization, they claimed high levels of OC and OCBs. This is dealt with in section 4.1. The findings argue for amendment of the conventional models of the OC – OCB linkage (section 4.2). Sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 deal with the middle managers' views (in both York and Wilmington) on their role and responsibility, their perception of OC and OCBs, and their techniques of managing them respectively.

4.1. Employees' perception of OC and OCBs

In organization Wilmington (P3), 105 of the managers' 197 direct reports (53%) responded to the online survey. Their mean score for OC, using the operationalization of the Klein definition (page 9), was 6.1 out of a maximum of 7. Similarly their mean scores for the different types of OCB ranged from 3.2 to 4.3 out of a maximum of 5. These OCB scores barely differed from the scores offered by the Wilmington managers when asked to score their teams, providing separate support for the employees' views. This suggests that these employees were highly committed to their organization, and that they also exhibited high levels of OCBs.

The direct reports were also asked to rate two other measures, one relating to their perception of how the organization cared for them, perceived organizational support (POS), and the other their perception of how their manager cared for them, leader member exchange (LMX). Both scores were on the low end of the scales: 3.7 and 2.9 out of a maximum of 7 respectively.

This contradicts the prediction of current models. These propose that when either or both of POS and LMX are high, then the perception of care for the employee encourages social exchange/reciprocity resulting in high levels of OC and OCBs. However, the direct reports in Wilmington reported high OC and OCBs alongside low POS and LMX. This leaves a puzzle as to what underpins such behaviours in this organization, since social exchange theory clearly does not explain it.

These unexpected findings fail to indicate which pathway to OCBs – through POS or through LMX – is the more important (a part of the second research question), since neither appears to be involved. They also demonstrated little if any variance between local (branch) and head office respondents, nor along functional lines. The absence of any significant variations between the direct reports levels of OC and OCBs also prevented any analysis of manager responses on the basis of higher versus lower levels as had been provided for in the research design.

4.2. Models of OC and OCBs extended

One possible explanation for the apparent anomaly highlighted in section 4.1 is that the high OC and OCBs are associated with a different target e.g. their co-workers. Another possibility, mentioned earlier, is that here the behaviour is a result of (less selfless) 'impression management'. Both possibilities will be discussed and further explored in terms of the implications for current models in chapter 5.

4.3. Managers' role and responsibility

Both empirical studies lend weight to the proposition that middle managers feel that it is their role to harness and cultivate their teams' OC and OCBs. This may be due in part to expectations placed on them by senior management and/or their HR departments. In organization York (P2) this was very much the case with specific training of middle managers and an element of their performance judged on their achievements in 'engagement'. It was also partly the case in organization Wilmington (P3) where middle manager involvement in engagement was encouraged by the HR department, but appeared unsupported by other resources (e.g. training or rewards) for the managers.

Any organizational support for middle managers' involvement in engagement appears to be complemented by their own belief in what will achieve the best (output) results e.g.

"I feel that if you motivate people and treat them with respect, you can get more out of them, they'll actually go out of their way to do extra for you..." (Wilmington middle manager) and *"So why do organizations invest time in training and developing people, because if they don't maintain them and develop them, they won't get the most out of them."* (York middle manager)

These middle managers appear to take the responsibility quite seriously as will be seen from the techniques they employ to manage their teams in section 4.5.

4.4. Managers' perceptions of OC and OCBs

The managers interviewed in York (P2) were not initially given any label for discussing the attachment of their direct reports to the organization, and most settled on either 'engagement' or 'attachment' as their descriptor. None mentioned organizational commitment.

In Wilmington (P3) the survey of middle managers referred to engagement in the invitation to participate and in the preamble, although the questions that related to OC did use the term commitment. As with their P2 counterparts, the Wilmington middle managers showed a comfort and familiarity with the term engagement during their interviews. There was virtually no mention of commitment.

Despite this, the evidence suggests that the construct they were discussing was that recognized by academics as OC. The signs they looked for e.g. energy, enthusiasm, involvement, employees seeking opportunities to learn and develop, are all recognised features of OC. The samples in both organizations also sought candidates during recruitment that would demonstrate similar characteristics e.g. hungry, go-getter, team oriented, and enthusiastic. The managers wanted OC/engagement¹ and regularly remarked on its importance to teamwork and output.

It was also clear that most of those interviewed conflated OC/engagement and its outcomes when using the term. In one sense this was merely the inclusion of the outward signs of engagement (by which they identified the employee's attachment) e.g. *"that's where you see engagement right there and that's people that are trying to make it better and come up with ideas"* (Wilmington middle manager). Coming up with ideas for improvement is more properly seen as an OCB. Other managers also referred to individual OCBs as engagement. Such construct confusion appears normal in practice, and is mostly unproblematic.

¹ The use of the term OC/engagement here is used to indicate that practising managers regularly use the latter term to refer to what academics term OC

However, one area where conflation can cause difficulty is with the target of the attachment. This research is focused on OC i.e. attachment to the *organization*, with an associated interest (in relation to OCB pathways) in attachment to the *middle manager*. Many of the respondents, when discussing OC/engagement, appeared indifferent to the target or targets of the attachment. This was not because they did not recognize the existence of different targets e.g. “... *he’s loving that couple of minutes of his job, so right now he’s very attached to where he’s at locally and is that because of it’s fulfilling a need for [him] to lead on and drive and go on find new solutions and stuff, versus my need to well, you know what, I’ll let [him] drive on there, because I just need to help this person with this piece of it so, that’s a very different fix there*” (York middle manager) and, “*I feel I can say they are engaged, they are committed to the company, the branch and me, and it makes life nice ...*” (Wilmington middle manager). Rather, the indifference appears due to the managers’ focus on outputs and effective working, particularly the KPIs they are given e.g. “*Well it reflects on their output, if they are a better worker then you don’t really care what’s engaging them ...*” (York middle manager).

The P2 middle managers were not directly asked about OCBs and those they mentioned without prompting invariably related to their KPIs. The numbers came first, “*And frankly if they are not delivered, it doesn’t matter what else you are doing. So be that health and safety, or cost, or waste, or right first time, whatever it may be. So my approach would tend to be to make sure that those bases are covered.*” (York middle manager)

The P3 managers were specifically probed on OCBs. Their examples mainly related to their KPIs and the latter were clearly a priority, “... *you know our performance is really going to be depending on how well these guys are engaged, because doing these projects is really above and beyond their basic job duties ...*” (Wilmington middle manager), and “... *because we are so tight right now, so lean that there is no room for you not to be engaged, and to pull your weight*” (Wilmington middle manager)

Despite acknowledging that both OC/engagement and OCBs were in essence discretionary on the part of the employee, the middle managers viewed them as essential to achieving their own roles and therefore made efforts to encourage and foster both in their direct reports. At times this was expressed in terms that implied the behaviours were expected as an implied part of the job i.e. not discretionary, “*if these guys didn’t go above and beyond their job description, half this stuff wouldn’t be done*” (Wilmington middle manager).

4.5. Managers’ techniques for engendering OC and OCBs

The techniques adopted by the middle managers in both samples can be divided broadly between those directed individually at a specific employee and those directed to the work group. These are considered in turn.

Alongside setting a personal example, encouraging and exhorting, before and during employment, the middle managers uniformly set great store by understanding the individuals in their charge, “...*and every person reacts different to every situation... and then we have to figure out what different approach would this particular individual... because we can’t use the same approach with everybody it just doesn’t work.*” (Wilmington middle manager) “*I think if you are any way managing people I think, their drivers and needs have got to be understood.*” (York middle manager)

- Personal development

Based on such assessments their techniques focused on developing the individual employee. This included the identification of specific tasks or projects that could be assigned to allow skill development or more job satisfaction, help and coaching on the job, and specific training off the job.

- Recognition

Another group of management techniques comprised various methods for recognizing and/or rewarding individual contributions, whether via informal thanks or acknowledgements to individuals, or via more formal ‘call outs’ in team meetings or encounters with superiors, where an individual is introduced as responsible for some improvement in processes.

- Communication

Not all techniques used by the middle managers related to individuals. They also employed tools to encourage OC/engagement and OCBs within the whole team. One such tool is communication: they use regular team meetings to pass on centrally originated messages, albeit ‘interpreted’ for local consumption, and various versions of a ‘big picture’ view of the context in which they and their teams are operating, *“You keep them apprised of how we are doing day to day. And I believe that that helps them feel a part and be more of a part, a genuine part than just waiting to be told what to do next instead. The buy in, the understanding, it’s just a whole morale change ...”* (Wilmington middle manager). They also communicate expectations and standards to provide clarity and challenge to further improvement, *“I spent a lot of time actually breaking the values down into plain English, quite often organizations for whatever reason ... use complex language to describe very simple things... That’s being allowed to do your best, being allowed to get on with your job, being supported properly, and being treated with respect, being listened to. That’s what it means in plain language.”* (York middle manager)

- Work climate

Another team level approach relates to the climate, with most managers attempting to foster a more sociable, ‘fun’ environment, even at their own expense where company funds are not authorized *“...and my team loves to eat and so three months ago we did a cookie baking contest ... and then we all kind of voted on whose was the best and it was just this silly little event, but it really was something that pulled us together.”* (Wilmington middle manager) and *“... Christmas party is the same thing, they told us you know spend \$15 the max you know I spend like \$35. I’m like you what, we only do that once a year ... I got so many thanks from them I mean there is this one guy was almost crying and so happy you know what I mean it’s huge.”* (Wilmington middle manager)

- Compensating for destructive influences

While this research focused on what managers did to influence and encourage the level of OC and or OCBs of their direct reports, the interviews in both samples highlighted another use of their management techniques, handling issues likely to diminish or destroy OC and OCBs. This was related to a context common to both organizations. Both York and Wilmington had over a long period (more than seven years) experienced continuing and regular downsizings and other cost constraints, resulting in loss of personnel and reduction or withdrawal of benefits for those remaining.

Thus their team communications e.g. on business conditions or the big picture, and their attempts at team building were sometimes viewed by the managers as remedial and to ameliorate corporate actions liable to discourage team members, “... *there’s a lot of people who are worried, there’s a lot of nervousness ... So the trick for me is I’ve got to give my team leaders the right message. So I think what I try to do personally is I’ve got to try and break that down into bite sized chunks that they understand. The how I would do that or personally is like I’ll build on the positives and, you know, try and put things into perspective.*” (York middle manager)

5. Contributions and discussion

5.1. Contributions

This research has explored the role of middle managers in two different global organizations. Both have been experiencing cost reductions and downsizing for an extended period of time. The findings contribute to our understanding of OC and OCBs in two ways. Firstly, they describe what middle managers look for and how they seek to influence the OC levels and OCBs of their direct reports. Secondly, the research (particularly P3) suggests that middle managers are mainly seeking to manage OC and OCBs to fulfil their task performance requirements or KPIs. It is likely that the manager focus on KPI related OCBs is a function of the context of the two organizations from which the samples were drawn.

In addition, the findings of high OC and OCBs in Wilmington being associated with low levels of perceived support from both the organization and the supervisor contributes to a clearer understanding of the associations previously observed of OC and OCBs with POS and LMX. It suggests that the current models (Fig. 3 p 18) are not able to explain or predict certain contexts e.g. major change and continuing downsizing. At best this will require some development of the models. In particular it will be important to accommodate self-serving as well as the existing altruistic/reciprocal antecedents for OC and OCBs.

A suggested basis for such an extended model is shown in Figure 4 and incorporates an additional pathway to OCBs through the employee's attempt at impression management. Impression management can be defined as *"the process whereby people seek to influence the image others have of them"* (Bolino & Turnley 1999, p.187). Here the suggestion is that the employee is motivated to provide OCBs in order to affect the perception of him or her formed by, in particular, their direct line manager (but also their co-workers and potentially senior managers). The reasoning for this inclusion, rather than an alternative explanation, is considered below in the discussion section.



Figure 4. Basis for a proposed extension of current models of the OC OCBs relationship

The figure specifically acknowledges the presence of the middle manager as one of the actors involved in the relationships unlike most of the existing OC research. Secondly, it calls for inclusion of impression management as a relevant variable in the processes leading to an employee exhibiting OCBs. To avoid complicating the diagram several other interactions, for example Bolino's suggested mediating role for impression management on the OC – OCBs relationship, are not included. However, this exclusion to assist comprehension should not be permitted to disguise one of Bolino's important observations regarding the difficulty of discriminating between employee OCBs based on positive and self serving motives, discussed further in the next section.

The empirical research reported here employed a technique, paired depth interviewing, previously not used in management studies. The interviews provided rich data and a comfortable and encouraging environment for participants. This suggests that when circumstances are appropriate (such as between similarly ranked colleagues where a discussion about for example a situation experienced by one of them is sought) then the technique can be useful. In particular it provides the interviewer with more time to note contributions and plan whether and how to intervene. This is a particular benefit compared with focus groups where the presence of more participants requires the researcher's attention to manage different contribution levels and direct the flow of conversation.

In terms of practice, the research assists organizations and managers in deciding how best to develop an understanding of levels of OC and OCBs, and focuses attention on three aspects: avoidance of excessive focus on KPIs; limiting organizational discouragement of OC and OCBs; and where continual downsizing is practised a realization that discretionary activity may cease to be optimal i.e. there are hidden costs to such strategies.

5.2. Discussion

Section 3.3. (p. 19) stated that this research was based (provisionally) on the assumption of some relationship between OC on the one hand and OCBs on the other. It turns out that this caution

was advisable. In certain contexts e.g. continued downsizing and cost reductions, the (positive) model of OCBs resulting from high employee perceptions of organizational support (POS), or manager support (LMX), or both, may not suffice. This brings to mind the view of the eminent statistician, George Box, “... *essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful*” (Box & Norman 1987, p.424)

If we are to explain the occurrence of high OC/OCBs concurrently with low POS/LMX the current models set out in Figure 3 (p 18) cannot be relied on. One alternative explanation is that following a significant major change/restructuring both OC and OCBs and trust in management (senior and supervisor) will fall, but OC/OCBs might subsequently recover. A longitudinal study over 10 years did not support this (Grunberg et al., 2008). The study followed four waves of change and observed reductions in OC and in both organizational support and trust in senior management (OCBs and trust in supervisor were not measured) at Times 2 and 3, relative to Time 1. However, while both organizational support and trust in senior management had fully recovered by Time 4, OC did not fully recover to Time 1 levels. This suggests that the perceptions of the organization and the management recovered more readily than the OC.

However, in Wilmington the reverse outcome was observed (low POS and low LMX, with high OC). It is also the case that in the current research, the middle managers spoke as though the change was ongoing rather than episodic, “*we’d just completed the previous operating model review from the whole site perspective, and the next one was being announced, we were like seeing a lot of heads going down ...*” (York manager).

A second alternative explanation is that the commitment is being driven by affective feelings for ones co-workers. This would lead to certain OCBs particularly those related to supporting others and would not necessarily be inconsistent with low scores for support from the organization, POS, and from the supervisor, LMX. However, it should not on its own lead to high OC scores and would certainly not be predicted by social exchange theory. The observed data would also not be consistent with empirical work that has been done on commitment profiles, which divides respondents (by cluster analysis) into differing degrees of commitment to different targets (Swales, 2004). In particular the latter study (of 300 UK accountants) discovered only around one in five respondents exhibiting commitment to their work group and little if any commitment to management (either senior or supervisor).

This leads quite naturally to consideration of other sources of high OC and OCBs that do not rely on social exchange theory. Mention has already been made of the possibility that less positive motivation might lead to high OC and OCBs, namely attempts by workers at ‘impression management’ (Bolino, 1999). Bolino suggested that people that engage in OCBs are likely to be well regarded by e.g. their supervisors and co-workers, and also that some measures of impression management include behaviours that have been separately described as OCBs (e.g. volunteering one’s help or doing favours for one’s supervisor); that is the concepts overlap. It is this explanation that is most plausible and has been introduced into the proposed extended model in Figure 4 (p 28).

Bolino’s position is that these various pathways to OCBs will coexist i.e. ‘traditional’ antecedents such as POS and LMX can yield OCBs through social exchange theory, while impression management can both moderate those relationships and also yield OCBs directly. This position is supported by a Yun et al. (2007) study that surveyed 107 full time employees taking a management course together with 99 of their direct managers, which showed positive relationships between individuals self enhancement motivation and OCBs and between OCBs

and managerial reward recommendations. The inclusion of impression management extends the current model and in circumstances where POS and LMX were low could still explain the resulting OCBs. Similarly impression management could plausibly result in behaviours designed to impress senior management e.g. high levels of OC.

Support for this (social psychology) perspective also comes from a different evolutionary psychology perspective (Salamon & Deutsch, 2006). This employs the handicap principle (imported from evolutionary biology) to explain that, “*by demonstrating the ability to bear the burden associated with costly OCBs, organizational members can credibly signal their otherwise unobservable capabilities to others.*” [Ibid. p 185] It is certainly plausible that in circumstances of continuing change, employees might experience heightened anxiety about job security and seek to compensate by behaviours that draw attention to their worth.

One further empirical support for the role of impression management comes from a single study showing a strong correlation between one form of impression management and one type of OCB (Wayne & Green, 1993). Interestingly, their original hypothesis was that any correlation should be negative. In the event the correlation was highly positive ($\rho = 0.49$, $p < .05$). This was even higher than the correlations observed between affective OC and OCBs in Meyer’s (2002) meta-analysis ($\rho = 0.32$). However, the latter should be regarded as much more reliable as it comprised 22 studies. Also the Wayne (1993) study was limited by the use of only two forms of OCB (altruism and compliance), by limited questions (a total of 11 for the three forms of impression management used) and by a sample of only 73 dyads.

Overall the evidence of this thesis and previous studies suggests that under certain circumstances e.g. continuing downsizing, organizations may experience a mix of both OC and impression management in their employees and that this mix, rather than solely OC, will drive any observed OCBs.

If as suggested the situation of high OC/OCBs concurrently with low POS/LMX can be explained by the presence of impression management on a significant scale, does it matter? The middle manager samples indicated their indifference to the source of phenomena; they just seek the OC/engagement and OCBs. However, this may be unwise and is discussed in the following chapter.

6. Implications for practice

It should be emphasized that this research was carried out in only two organizations and can in no way be generalized. Nevertheless, the context of both York and Wilmington – continuing cost cutting and employee reduction – is widespread. Thus some of the findings may prove important to a wider group of organizations.

6.1. OC/engagement during restructuring

An important feature of such downsizing and other efficiency strategies is the need to harness the proximal employees' knowledge of their processes and activity to develop the (much-valued) efficiencies. Such co-operation on the part of the workforce presupposes some positive attachment to either or both the organization and the direct manager. This in turn implies reasonable or high levels of POS and/or LMX. And yet this was precisely the reverse of what was found in this research in relation to Wilmington. Even in the case of York where there was no separate survey of direct reports' levels of OC, OCBs, POS and LMX, the interviews established that York managers were focusing attention on OCBs that related to achieving KPIs and sought to encourage them. The comments from York managers about uncertainty in their direct reports and a sense of change fatigue support the conjecture that their teams too might have exhibited high engagement/OC alongside low perceived support levels.

Thus if and when high levels of OC/OCBs are paired with lower levels of POS/LMX, and if impression management rather than social exchange is the more powerful relationship, then the co-operation from the workforce may be limited to that which will be of use to them i.e. enhancing their own reputation with management. It will not necessarily be driven by the purpose of improving the organization and its processes. Specifically, ideas volunteered for process improvements may not be those that lead to greater workloads, greater job insecurity, or even more organizational change.

It has been observed that employees can exhibit both OCBs and counterproductive work behaviours (Klotz & Bolino, 2013). They explain this by way of a 'moral licence' that permits the individual engaging in praiseworthy behaviours to also do the reverse, and suggest that the combination diminishes the resulting harm to the individual's reputation. This again brings impression management into the picture. Overall this suggests that there is a complex underpinning to any exhibition of OC and accompanying OCBs, and that these phenomena would be better viewed as a product of both selfless and selfish motivations.

The lesson for managers in these circumstances must be to examine closely the degree to which employees are likely to be influenced by and feel positive attachment to the organization (or their manager), rather than rely on their observation of OCBs (of whatever type) as signifying POS or LMX. It matters, because OCBs arising from impression management motives may not result in optimal improvements in efficiency etc.

6.2. OC/engagement in more positive contexts

Even in those organizations not engaged in restructuring and downsizing, it is possible that impression management derived behaviours may play a role in the employee organization

relationship. Some findings in relation to a different construct, social capital, which are relevant to this, show that an employee's affective OC (one component of the Meyer three component model of OC) is increased by higher job security, lower workload and lower expectations of organizational change, and that all three effects worked through the partially mediating factor of social capital (Parzefall & Kuppelwieser, 2012). This study draws upon the traditional explanation for such virtuous cycles, namely social exchange theory. The increased levels of OC can in turn be expected to lead to high levels of OCBs.

However, in contrast Bolino et al. (2002) suggest that it is the incidence of OCBs that contributes to the development of social capital. Their argument relies, in part, on prior research in sociology (their review found little organizational research on the topic) that linked high levels of civic participation with communities exhibiting high levels of social capital. As a result they conclude that the direction of causality would run from OCBs to social capital and not in the reverse direction [Ibid. P507]. The lesson for managers, even in more positive contexts, is that they too should examine critically the level and sources of positive attachment and OCBs amongst their workforce.

What this suggests is that if the primary organizational purpose is to achieve greater efficacy and overall performance, then it may be best served by encouraging positive attachment to the organization. This in turn will require attention to care for the workforce and less knee jerk attention to hitting the numbers and mechanistic KPIs.

Conversely, if the primary organizational purpose is to attain short-term improvements in the numbers (in line with the quarterly earnings required by the investment community and the bonus schemes of many managers), then laser like focus on KPIs can be better justified. However, this strategy leaves open the prospect of longer-term destruction of trust and associated benefits to the organization, investors and workers. An interesting perspective on this balance is provided by Rousseau (1998) who examined the ways to cultivate or destroy what she terms 'deep structure identification' by the employee in the organization, even in times of considerable change. She notes the relevance of the employment context, *"Firms in stable environments, other things being equal, are better positioned to foster deep structure identification on the part of their members. In more dynamic environments, firms buffering employees from external shocks, for example, by redeploying redundant workers rather than terminating their employment, are more likely to perpetuate deep structure identification."* [Ibid. P 221]

If, as has been suggested, OCBs can emerge from a mix of both selfless and selfish motives, and social exchange can co-exist with impression management, this presents managers with a further quandary. To what degree are their actions to encourage OC/engagement and OCBs successful? It seems unlikely that, whether or not the individual employee is aware of their own mix, they will wish to share this with their manager. This leaves the manager with the not unfamiliar task of making sense of what their employees do and aspiring to understand their reasons. Such judgements may well matter as a lot of resource and management time is expended in many organizations on the task of securing an engaged workforce.

7. Limitations and future research

7.1. Limitations

Before considering the implications of this work for future research, it is worth reviewing the limitations of the present study. These can perhaps be best understood in the context of a wider critique of research into the relationship between human resource management and performance (Guest, 2011). The review concluded,

“In summary, the research is riddled with error both with respect to data on HRM and on outcomes ... it also leaves room for considerable doubt about the processes at play ... There is a risk that research sophistication, and more particularly statistical sophistication can become an end in itself, driven in part by the publishing policies of some top journals. It can also lead to a focus on the use of established measures, even if their appropriateness for the research context is questionable.” [Ibid. p 10]

Sentiments like these have often been expressed in relation to research into OC and OCBs, albeit less trenchantly.

This research has sought to respond to these risks to some extent, firstly by employing predominantly qualitative techniques to investigate the middle managers’ views. However, the key finding of the apparent absence of social exchange in generating the high OC and OCBs in Wilmington was based mainly on surveys of the middle managers and their employees. Here the response to the critique above was based on using recently developed definitions of the construct, OC, and recent operationalizations of both OC and OCBs. The latter were judged to be more appropriate than their older counterparts. Nevertheless the measures of POS and LMX used older established measures that may be vulnerable to criticism.

Secondly, from the outset this research allowed the possibility that other pathways to the outcome of OCBs (other than those predicted by social exchange) were possible and was therefore able to pick up the observation that middle managers in both samples were emphasizing types of OCB that related directly to performance.

Thirdly, the research was cross sectional, focusing on just two organizational contexts, and therefore there are limits to any generalizability. It is apparent that the economic situations of both York and Baltimore, the organizations investigated in this research, involved continuing downsizing and restructuring. The findings may be less relevant to more expansionary contexts, where stability and growth are more prevalent. Overall it may be concluded that impression management can contribute to the development of OC and OCBs in some economically restricted contexts.

7.2. Future research

The foregoing suggests that further research to examine impression management and OC in the same organization would be most useful. It further argues for resolving the potential for confusion in the operationalization of both constructs identified by Bolino, *“but many measures*

of impression management include specific behaviors that OCB researchers label as citizenship behaviors.” [Ibid. p 85] before embarking on such research.

It is likely that the choice of organizations that have been undergoing heavy and continuing reorganization might enhance the possibility of observing similar situations.

Another likely productive approach would employ a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. For example, it may be the case that even where middle managers are trying hard to encourage and enhance OC and OCBs in their teams, and are seen to be ‘successful’, the more likely explanation lies in impression management (as appears to have been the case in Wilmington). If so mixed methods that included some interviews with the managers’ direct reports might yield confirmation or indications of this.

As is always the case, it would be valuable if future research could be carried out longitudinally over a sufficient period to encompass periods of substantial change and periods of what passes for more stable operations. It is appreciated that such research is very difficult to organize and that even when possible is often associated with substantial turnover in precisely the target groups for observation (including the middle managers). Nevertheless this may prove the most powerful contributor to resolving some of the remaining puzzles in OC and OCBs.

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8. Appendices

A. Scoping study

Scoping Study – Assessment IV

Managers' role in Organizational Commitment

Supervisory Panel:

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Submitted by:

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DBA Cohort 2010-14

21st September 2011

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Executive Summary

For at least the last decade, businesses based in the so-called developed economies have experienced significant pressures causing them to restructure, downsize and otherwise raise productivity and reduce unit costs. This has often been associated with the withdrawal or reduction of previously provided employee benefits, both monetary and non-monetary e.g. training opportunities.

However, such trends have also had adverse impact on the levels of organizational commitment, OC, among many (but not all) employees. As well as being detrimental to the employees, this is not viewed as beneficial for the organization. High levels of OC have previously been associated with lower turnover rates, better performance and higher incidence of citizenship behaviors. The business issue is essentially how to maintain or restore levels of OC in their employees.

This scoping study reviews the literature on OC and in particular what is known about the various antecedents of OC. It appears that some of these e.g. the organization's values and its HR policies have been much more studied than the specific role of the employee's direct manager or supervisor. The latter is shown to represent a gap in the existing literature and serves as the focus for the subsequently proposed research.

Underlying theory, primarily motivation and social exchange theories, is identified. Again the omission of the manager/supervisor's contribution is noted. Attention is also drawn to the ambiguity of the manager/supervisor's role as both an agent of the organization and as an independent (self-interested) actor.

Drawing on this analysis, a research question seeking to understand what managers do to manage their employees' OC is proposed. An outline of a possible research design is described, comprising a mix of journals, focus groups and self-reported surveys. Some of the challenges to the design and the analysis of the possible data are listed for further discussion and work. Nevertheless the study concludes that the potential benefit of learning more in this under researched area outweighs the challenges and risks of the proposed P1 project.

1. Introduction

1.1. The business issue

The term organizational commitment, OC, has been used for over 45 years. It refers to individuals experiencing attachment to the organization of which they are members. Although types of organization vary greatly (e.g. schools, clubs, and churches), the emphasis here is on corporations. They value OC because of its association with such desirable outcomes as lower turnover rates and higher incidence of organizational citizenship behaviours, OCBs (e.g. unprompted assistance with other co-workers' tasks) e.g. (Cotton & Tuttle 1986; Meyer et al. 2002)

However, changes in developed countries' business environments over the last decade e.g. frequent restructuring and 'downsizing', restriction of previously provided employee benefits, and lower job security, have led to pressure on OC (Meyer, 2009); (Grunberg, Moore, Greenberg, & Sikora, 2008). Meyer, for example, identified four key factors, viewed as under threat and potentially contributing to the erosion of OC:

"These key factors are perceived organizational support, organizational justice, person-organization fit and psychological contract fulfillment." [Ibid. p 42]

Each factor will be picked up later, but it is already clear that one of the challenges facing business is the achievement (or restoration) of higher levels of OC. As will be seen later, the literature has looked at a number of ways of enhancing OC, from the impact of senior management and of organization-wide policies administered by HR e.g. training and development. The role of the line manager/supervisor is also thought to influence employee's OC e.g. (Jernigan & Beggs, 2005); (Rousseau, 1996) but is less well documented. The need is to better understand how, if at all, the line manager/supervisor can support OC.

1.2. Mapping

Some authors e.g. Swailes (2002) trace the origins of OC back to Fayol's principles of management and Weber's work on bureaucracy. However, the main work on OC has occurred in the organizational behaviour 'space'. Here there has been work on OC in several areas: primarily Organizational Culture, Employee-Organization Relationships, and Management Behaviors. Fig. 1 shows this, together with some examples of the specific sub topics within each area that overlap with OC. These are the main foci of this paper.

1.3. Study approach

The paper first examines the developing definition of the construct (Sec. 2.1) and then reviews the literature on OC within each of the three domains identified in Figure 1 (Sec. 2.2-2.4), focussing where appropriate on management's role. Next the underlying theory is reviewed (Sec. 2.5). Then the literature findings are summarized, the significance in relation to management is discussed, and a research question is developed (Sec. 3). Some thoughts on possible methodologies and next steps are then proposed (Sec 4).

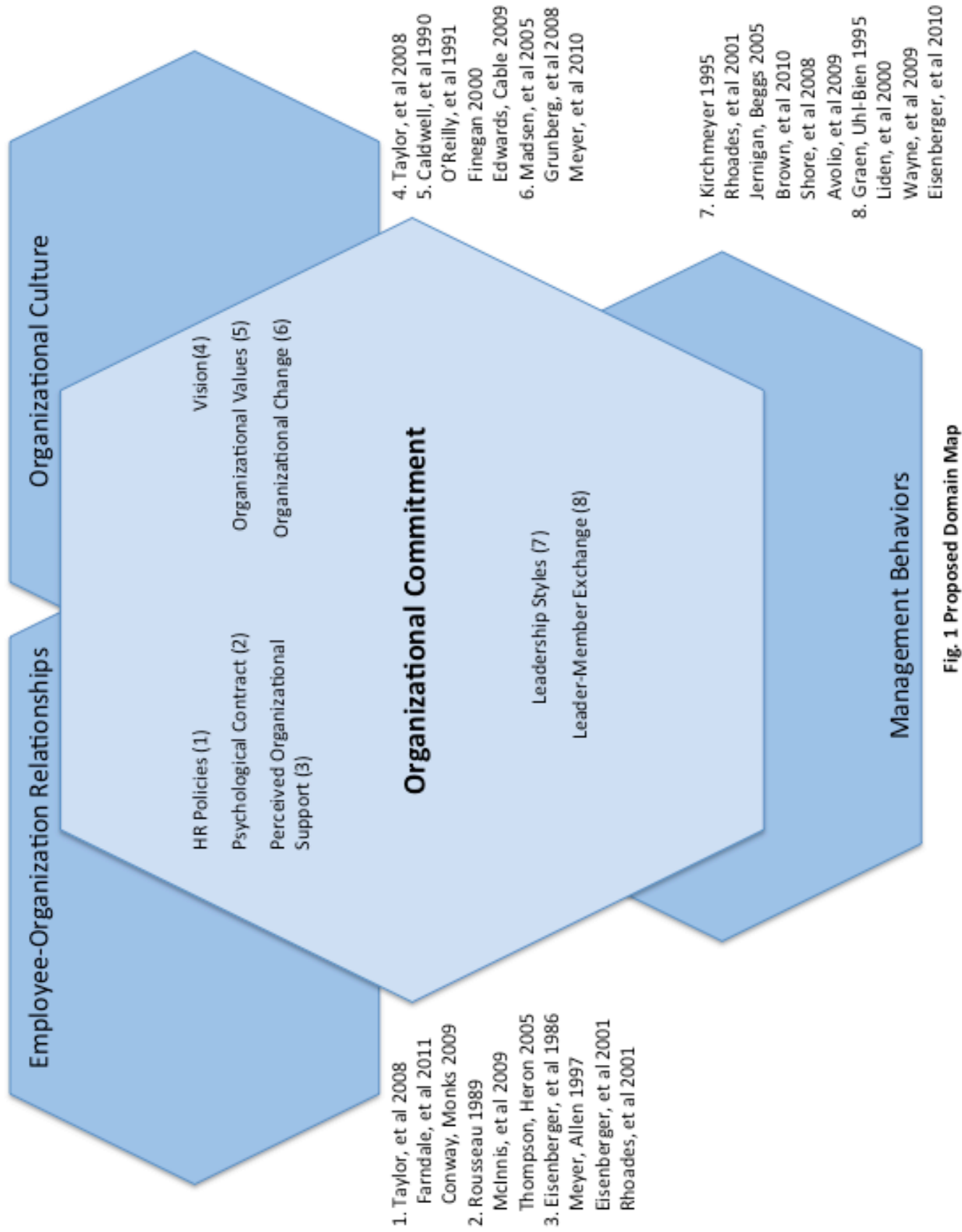


Fig. 1 Proposed Domain Map

2. Literature Review

2.1. OC Construct/Meaning

There is a large literature on OC. A search of just one database (PsychInfo) using the terms {manage* or middle manage*} and {organis* commitment or organiz* commitment} yielded almost 1600 articles. Even after removing duplicates, and filtering for relevance, nearly 200 articles remained. Before considering any findings, it is appropriate to clarify what is meant by the term, because many definitions have been proposed.

OC has developed as an increasingly important construct in the management literature. Prior to its introduction in the 1960's, there was little interest in employees' characteristics or concerns. Most management research dealt only with the design of work processes and organization structures, and viewed employees more like components on the first assembly lines. There were a few exceptions e.g. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) and the Hawthorne experiments (Roethlisberger, 1941).

From the outset it has proved difficult to tie down a consensus definition of OC. One early contributor wrote,

"There is little consensus concerning the definition of the concept or its measurement ... Commitment is viewed as a partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of an organization, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth"
(Buchanan, 1974, p. p 533)

Buchanan's definition illustrates one persistent feature of most definitions of OC, namely the inclusion of several aspects of 'attachment' in a single construct. In some ways this development was natural because many, if not all, authors then viewed OC as an attitude. According to (Secord & Backman, 1969, p. p 167), cited in (Arnold & Randall, 2010, p. p 249):

"Attitudes were defined by Secord and Backman (1969) as 'certain regularities of an individual's feelings, thoughts and predispositions to act towards some aspect of his [sic] environment'. Feelings represent the affective component of an attitude, thoughts the cognitive component and predispositions to act the behavioral component." Emphasis in the original

Not only does the Buchanan definition comprise affective, cognitive and behavioral parts. It also refers to different 'foci' for the attachment (i.e. goals, values and the organization for its own sake). This is no isolated phenomenon, another popular definition includes:

*"a) a belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values
b) a willingness to exert effort towards organizational goal accomplishment
c) a strong desire to maintain organizational membership"*
(Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. p 27)

It is easy to imagine two co-workers one of whom might be comfortable with the organization's goals but not so happy with its values, while the other experiences the reverse feelings. This could present difficulties for an organization contemplating a change in its goals.

Reichers was among the first to suggest that commitment would be better regarded as relating to multiple foci or targets. One particular benefit he noted was that it *"may more realistically reflect the nature of employee-organization attachments as individuals actually experience them"* (Reichers, 1985, p. p 465) This notion has led to work on commitments to a wide range of other 'targets' e.g. job, co-workers, career/occupation, trade union, and manager/supervisor, all separate from and additional to OC. However, it remains unclear what current authors include when they use the OC term, and the conflation of goals and values remains in most current definitions.

The next major step in the development of OC occurred when a three-component model was proposed to unite those researchers following a ‘behavioral’ path with those on an ‘attitudinal’ path (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

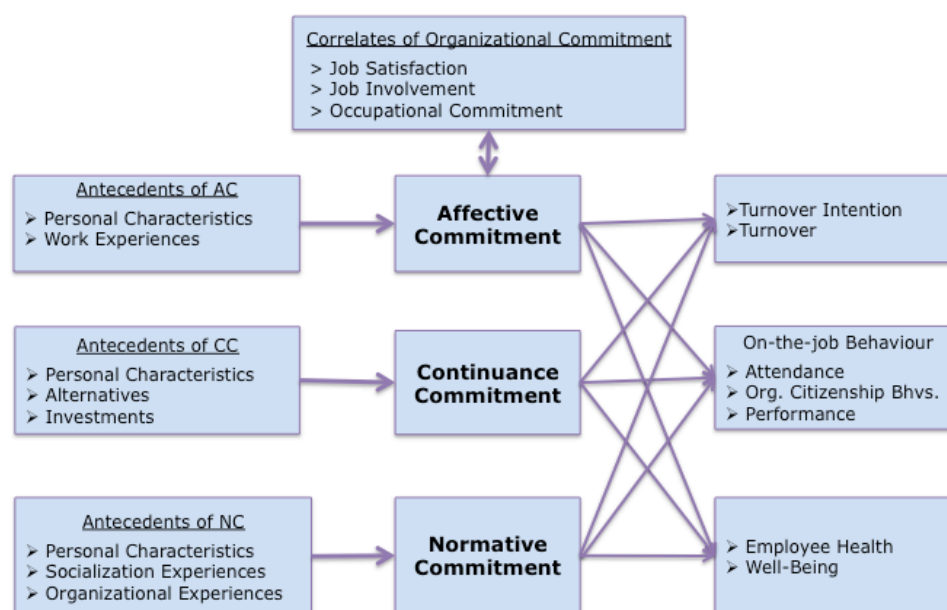


Fig. 2 Three-component model of OC from (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002)

Their three components replaced the attitudinal formulations with what they termed three ‘mindsets’, while the behavioral portion of this and other previous definitions was moved to the ‘outcomes’ anticipated from employees with high levels of OC.

Another feature of the model is that the authors expressly propose that the three components, far from being mutually exclusive, will be experienced simultaneously and “to varying degrees” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. p 68).

More recently while the three-component structure has been retained, the conceptualization of commitment has changed. One review of the literature exemplifies this shift to view OC, neither as an attitude nor a mindset, but rather as a more concrete, ‘bond’.

“Central to this view is the position that commitment is a psychological state reflecting how strongly one is bound (or psychologically attached) to the commitment target ... When defined in this manner, commitment does not need to be intentional or even consciously recognized, as perception is often automatic.” (Klein, Molloy, & Cooper, 2009, p. p 9)

Klein et al favoured this formulation in part because it is not conflated with either the antecedents or the outcomes of OC. It is proposed to adopt their attachment as a bond and psychological state meaning in this paper. The issue of some implied assumptions will be returned to when discussing the underlying theory of OC.

Before leaving the definition of OC, it is necessary to refer to two other terms that are (less frequently) used in the academic literature. This is primarily because both are more widely used in practice literature and when used (both academically and in practice), they overlap with the OC concept.

The first is Employee Engagement. The term appears to have originated in the commercial market place and has been adopted by Towers Perrin and Gallup, both large providers of employee survey services. As with OC, engagement has a number of definitions.

Some are very similar to those for OC, while others reflect a larger concept, akin to motivation (and with OC, perhaps, as a component). One excellent review notes that it might be useful while condemning its pedigree:

"The notion of employee engagement is a relatively new one, one that has been heavily marketed by human resource (HR) consulting firms that offer advice on how it can be created and leveraged. Academic researchers are now slowly joining the fray, and both parties are saddled with competing and inconsistent interpretations of the meaning of the construct." (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. p 3)

However, this author also agrees with the views of Professor David Guest, quoted in a recent report prepared for the UK Government:

"He pointed out that much of the discussion of engagement tends to get muddled as to whether it is an attitude, a behaviour or an outcome or, indeed, all three. He went on to suggest that the concept of employee engagement needs to be more clearly defined or it needs to be abandoned." (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009, p. p 8)

The second term is Organizational Identity and this refers to the employee's identification with the organization's goals and values. Most authors view it as a basis or part of OC e.g. O'Reilly and Chatman view commitment as a *"psychological attachment"* that *"results from identification with the attitudes, values or goals of the model"* (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986, p. p 492)

Both employee engagement and organizational identity are much less used in the academic literature, and the former has even less consensus as to its meaning than OC, while the latter is widely viewed as a part of OC. For these reasons they will not be considered in detail in this paper, although findings relevant to OC are included.

2.2. OC and Organizational Culture

Schein has defined culture as:

"(a) a pattern of basic assumptions, (b) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, (c) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, (d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore (e) is to be taught to new members as the (f) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1990, p. p 111)

This definition links readily to the more populist description of 'the way we do things around here' (Bower, 1966 cited in Deal & Kennedy 1982, p.4). This is relevant to the development of OC, as the corporate culture of an organization will include information on what the organization expects from employees, and what the employees can expect from their organization. The main theories used to underpin OC explain the emergence of the bond or attachment to the organization in terms of these mutual expectations.

Within the organization culture domain three different topics have been connected with OC, vision or mission, values, and organizational change.

One study of vision/mission and OC examined over 1600 employees in 10 different multinational companies, MNCs. The authors proposed that,

"The shared mission in an MNC may affect commitment by clarifying roles and making daily work more goal-oriented among employees who are geographically dispersed and culturally diverse" (Taylor et al., 2008, p. p 504)

Their results supported the hypothesis that MNC employees' perception of the MNC's mission is

positively related to OC. From the managerial perspective it is also interesting that they demonstrated some indirect mediating effects (albeit small), relating to senior management's orientations, namely a) global orientations, relating to awareness of global competitive dynamics, and b) geocentric orientations, relating to fair rewards and effective use of talent worldwide (Ibid, p 506). Thus the more that employees viewed the senior management (and their vision/mission) to be both in line with the challenges of the marketplace, and the treatment of employees to be fair and not biased towards particular nationalities, the higher their subsequent levels of OC.

Of the organizational culture work that relates to OC, a large proportion has studied the influence of organizational values. This is unsurprising since the underlying values (if consensual) lead to the corresponding norms of behaviour that are associated with the culture.

One finding was that recently recruited employees showed stronger OC, where the organization possessed both well-developed recruitment and socialization procedures, and well-defined value systems (Caldwell, Chatman, & O'Reilly, 1990). The same authors developed a new instrument, the Organizational Culture Profile, OCP, to measure person-organization fit, and went on to demonstrate that the latter predicts OC in a number of different organizations (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). This two-part study was part cross sectional (testing the validity of the tool) and part longitudinal (testing whether person organization fit at time 1 helped predict commitment at time 2), further strengthening the claim to some sort of causal linkage. Their method used an average of employees' perceptions of the organizations' values, measured using the OCP i.e. all respondents ratings of organizational values were summed and averaged, then that profile was compared with an individual's perception of their own values. There may be a weakness in this approach, since an individual's attraction to an organization is likely to be more closely related to his/her perception of the organization's values, than to some average of all respondents. Nevertheless a significant association was demonstrated.

In a different approach Finegan also examined person-organization fit and OC, but related the employees' individual perceptions of both their own personal values and the organizational values (Finegan, 2000). Again the results supported the influence of an employee's perception of the organization's values on OC. Interestingly Finegan also found that,

"the match between the values of the person and the organization is less important in determining one's level of commitment than is the perception of the values of the organization." (Ibid, p 162)

This suggests that employees are capable and willing to view their commitment to the organization based on 'organizational values'. However, it cannot be ruled out that the effect of ones personal values will have shown its influence earlier e.g. in the decision to join the firm initially.

Irrespective of the importance of congruence between organizational and personal values, the former are clearly associated with OC. It seems likely that an employee's perception of organizational values may be influenced by both the senior management role in crystallizing and promulgating the values and also the manager/supervisor role in exemplifying them. However, neither study specifically examined the roles of management.

The role of management and trust was mentioned in another study of value congruence, albeit only fleetingly in the conclusion. The authors noted that,

"trust carried much of the relationship between value congruence and outcomes" and "initiatives could include clarifying reasons behind decisions made in the organization, holding frequent question-and-answer sessions between employees and senior management, and ensuring that

performance management processes are fair” (Edwards & Cable, 2009, p. p 673).

A few studies of organizational change investigated the commitment levels of staff in relation to potential barrier or enabling mechanisms that might influence the success of such initiatives. However, most of the organizational change literature ignores OC and focuses on topics of less interest to students of commitment e.g. the strategic choices, management decision making processes and the (project) management of change initiatives.

One relevant study, in four different companies in North America, identified a relationship between employees OC levels and their preparedness for change (Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005). Although the study was cross sectional and any causality (or its direction) is unclear, it is significant that both the hypotheses and the discussion focused on the possibility that high levels of OC led to the preparedness for change and not the reverse. Most of the other literature on OC and change has concentrated on the effects of the actual change programs or events on subsequent levels of OC.

For example, Grunberg investigated a single large technology company over a period of nearly 10 years. During the period and their four survey cycles, the company merged with a rival and suffered two very large reductions in manpower, one over a protracted period (Grunberg, Moore, Greenberg, & Sikora, 2008). For the sample that remained in the final survey (well over 500 people), the authors noted that attitudes to the job (with the exception of job involvement) had declined substantially in Waves 2 and 3, relative to the initial Wave 1, but had recovered by Wave 4. In contrast, changes in the organizational attitudes (support, trust, commitment etc.) were more varied. Two measures of trust in the management follow a similar pattern, but OC while declining in Waves 2 and 3, did not return to Wave 1 levels by Wave 4. The authors speculate that it may be associated with a detachment from commitment at work in favour of the also measured commitment to life outside of work (Ibid. p 229). One explanation for their caution was that alternatively the maturation of the sample over the period might have led to the change in preference on work life balance.

A different, but also significant, longitudinal study explored the congruence between personal and organizational values and the ability of this to predict both commitment and intention to stay in the organization under conditions of organizational change (Meyer, Hecht, Gill, & Toplonytsky, 2010). Although they found partial support for their hypotheses (in that congruence did predict commitment particularly for two of four culture ‘types’) they also found that *“the more an organization’s policies and practices reflect concern for employee morale and development (human relations) and encourage innovation and growth (open systems), the more employees want and intend to stay”* (Ibid p. 469). This conclusion feeds into the support roles of both HR policies and management actions as will be observed in the next two sections respectively.

2.3. OC and Employee-Organization Relationships

The employee-organization relationship domain is very wide and has been described as *“an overarching term to describe the relationship between the employee and the organization”* (Shore, Porter, & Zahra, 2004, p. p 292) cited in (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007, p. 166). For the purpose of this paper it is taken to include the literature on human resources and their management, HRM. Increased levels of OC are viewed as one of the desired outcomes from HRM and some studies have investigated this. For example, the study of MNCs, already referred to, also looked at the impact of HRM on fostering OC (Taylor, Levy, Boyacigiller, & Beechler, 2008). Their results showed a positive relationship between the two.

Another study distinguished two types of “*commitment-enhancing performance management practices*” HCPMs, one focused on employee involvement (e.g. in objective setting, in performance appraisal etc.) and one focused on employee development (e.g. training opportunities and job challenges) (Farndale, Hope-Hailey, & Kelliher, 2011, p. 8). In addition to showing a direct relationship between OC and training opportunities, the study showed that organizational justice mediated the relationship between OC and HCPM activities. “*In other words, in addition to the actual presence of HCPM practices, these practices must be perceived to be fair in order for their full effect on commitment levels to be observed.*” (Ibid. p 17) This emphasizes that the individual’s perception of the HRM practice, rather than the presence or absence of the practice is what matters, but also indicates a potential role for the influence of the manager/supervisor as the agent delivering such practices. The paper also highlights the importance of employee’s levels of trust and observes that, “*employee trust in senior management is interpreted through the company’s policies and practices, in this case performance management practices*” (Ibid. p 10).

Similar conclusions may be drawn from a third study of three different financial services organizations in Eire (Conway & Monks, 2009). They found that employee attitudes to HR practices are significant in predicting levels of affective OC (though not the other two components) and that the relative importance of different types of HR activity varied between the organizations. In discussing the question of whether commitment can be managed they concluded that, “*there is a degree of choice for firms in identifying what practices they utilise to influence these outcomes, or that employee needs will determine what practices firms need to pay attention to.*” (Ibid, p 149) They also reported on their interviews with the HR directors of the three organizations.

One referred specifically to the role of the manager/supervisor,

“There is no question in my mind that no matter what you say or do, if you haven’t got people in there in lower levels who actually believe in the philosophy of how to manage people and can do it, then you’re snookered.” (Ibid. p 153)

The question of the capacity and competence of manager/supervisors to execute such actions will be returned to in the next section.

While the previous study dealt primarily with affective OC, Gellatly et al studied the combination of affective and continuance OC creating 4 ‘profiles’ (Gellatly, Hunter, Currie, & Irving, 2009). They showed that depending on the profile it was possible for the same HR practice e.g. generous non-portable pension benefits to lead either to a feeling of being trapped or of being devoted (Ibid. p 879)

There are two other aspects of the employee-organization relationship that feature regularly in studies of OC, the psychological contract and perceived organizational support, POS.

Although writers such as Argyris and Levinson proposed the psychological contract in the early 1960’s, it first came under serious consideration some 20 years later. It is defined as an, “*individual’s belief in the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another group*” (Rousseau, 1989, p. 123). McInnis (2009) examined specific features of such contracts e.g. explicit/implicit, negotiated/imposed, equal/unequal and their impact on OC. They found that, “*employees reported stronger AC and NC when the contract was trust-based, negotiated, collective, broad, equal, and long-term.*” (Ibid. p 176) where AC is affective commitment and NC is normative commitment.

A significant amount of the work on the psychological contract and OC has investigated the ‘breach’ of the contract. One study surveyed over 400 R&D workers across 6 firms and

concluded that a third construct, organizational justice, moderates the relationship between the psychological contract and affective commitment. Thus there were circumstances where other favourable employee perceptions (in this case justice) could compensate for deficiencies in the psychological contract (Thompson & Heron, 2005). It is also worth noting that the psychological contract has attracted criticism as a concept for being anything but a contract, difficult to measure, and ideologically driven (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006).

The POS construct was developed in the late 1980's and represents the organization's commitment to the employee as perceived by the latter (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). If the psychological contract construct focuses on the two-way relationship between the employer/organization and the employee, then the POS construct can be best understood as focussing on what the employee thinks of what the employer/organization provides over and above the purely employment contract.

In addition to developing a survey that would measure POS (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986), subsequent research has looked at many aspects of the relationship between POS and affective commitment. Some of these are referred to in a review of the antecedents of AC Meyer & Allen (1997) and include factors such as organizational justice, trust and fairness.

It was suggested that, *"POS contributes to affective commitment and job performance by creating a felt obligation to care about the organization and the organization's objectives"* (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001, p. 43). This was confirmed with a sample of over 400 postal employees. A subsequent study included a longitudinal analysis allowing the direction of causality to be inferred (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). Using a survey of 400 alumni working in a wide variety of organizations POS was found to mediate positive associations of work experiences with affective commitment. Separately, around 500 salespeople were surveyed over either a two or three year period. The latter survey showed that POS led to affective commitment.

Thus far in this review, OC has been based on the (usually unwritten) assumption that commitment levels are broadly stable over time. However, at least one paper deserves mention that views the construct as more volatile (Kahn, 1990)

This deals with two different situations in the US, counsellors in a summer camp and employees of an architectural practice. In an exemplary description of a qualitative study, Khan describes how he participated fully in the first context (as a counsellor and a self declared researcher), but was more detached in the second. Moments of personal engagement or disengagement of the employees are investigated, and viewed as changing frequently, rather like the role of an actor. Kahn contrasts this with the commitment concept that, *"suggest that organization members strike and hold enduring stances (committed, involved, alienated), as if posing in still photographs."* (Ibid. p 693)

He concludes that there are three broad psychological conditions, *"the momentary rather than static circumstances of people's experiences that shape behaviors."* (Ibid. p 703) and terms these meaningfulness, safety and availability. Meaningfulness refers to the work and being valued for it. Safety refers to the norms of behavior and feeling secure within the organization. Availability refers to the competing calls on the individual's attention. Each condition can encourage or discourage personal engagement. Thus in Kahn's view individual's engagement (the author's term) levels will fluctuate many times during a work day. If so then any survey of individual's can at best yield some average of that individual's perceptions. This argues for extreme caution

in evaluating conventional OC research.

2.4. OC and Management Behaviours

This section will focus on the literature that deals with the interaction of OC and the individual's direct manager or supervisor. Reference has already been made to the contributions of 'senior management'.

One intrinsic complication is that a manager/supervisor can be viewed simultaneously as both an individual interacting directly with his/her subordinates while acting out of 'self-interest', and as an agent acting on behalf of their organization. Whether or not the actors perceive such a distinction as significant, or at all, is unclear. However, it is noted in the literature and will be returned to below and again in the section on theory.

A number of studies have pointed to a positive association between manager/supervisor support and OC. For example, a longitudinal study of affective commitment showed that initial supervisor support for recently recruited managers had greater impact on their subsequent commitment when the manager was dissimilar to his/her workgroup (Kirchmeyer, 1995), cited in (Morrow, 2011, p. p 23). Similarly, Rhoades study of the mediating role of POS on affective commitment showed both significant direct and indirect associations between supervisor support and commitment (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001).

A related but different study found that satisfaction with ones' manager/supervisor was positively associated with OC (Jernigan & Beggs, 2005). As a result the authors suggested that managers might assess employees' satisfaction with their supervisors regularly, and use high-commitment practices such as development appraisals.

Performance appraisals are a particular example of manager/supervisor interaction with the employee. One study examined the impact on OC of low quality performance appraisals, as viewed by the employee (Brown, Hyatt, & Benson, 2010). Quality was measured by reference to four factors, clarity, communication, trust and fairness. Surveying a sample of more than 3000 employees of one Australian public sector organization, the authors used cluster analysis to show that those experiencing low quality appraisals were likely to have lower levels of commitment. This reinforces the finding that high commitment management practices (including performance appraisals) need to be perceived as fair to maximise their influence on commitment (Farndale, Hope-Hailey, & Kelliher, 2011).

Studies of OC viewed only through the eyes of the employee predominate, in part because of the widespread use of self-reporting surveys as the basic measurement tool. However, some studies have examined OC from a manager's point of view. One interestingly looked at both the supervisor/managers' view and the self-reported employee view of OC (Shore, Bommer, & Shore, 2008). It showed that the manager's rating of employee commitment was largely associated with their job performance, but was also associated with both the employee's self-rating and with the latter's impression management tactics i.e. ingratiation (Ibid. p 647). More significantly, the managers' ratings were associated with subsequent behavior towards the employee with high manager ratings associated with higher contingent rewards, such as compliments, promotion ratings etc.

This leads naturally to consideration of the relationship between the manager/supervisor and employee. Work on leadership points to the likelihood that different styles of leadership are more or less favourable to the development of OC. One recent review of such studies suggests the

relative importance of both ‘authentic’ and ‘charismatic’ leadership in this respect (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009).

Another fruitful area of research into the manager/supervisor employee relationship is that of Leader Member Exchange, LMX. Following observation that leaders do not use an ‘average’ style (as had been previously thought), but rather use different styles with different employees, LMX theory was developed to explain this differentiation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Initially this was attributed to resource constraints on the managers, particularly time availability. Subsequently other characteristics of both leaders and followers were shown to contribute to ‘high’ LMX relationships.

LMX has been shown to associate with OC consistently e.g. (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000). In a recent review, *“out of 29 studies that we located, 23 examined correlations between LMX and affective commitment and all found either direct or mediated positive relationships”* (Wayne, Coyle-Shapiro, Eisenberger, Liden, Rousseau, & Shore, 2009, p. 255).

More recently, the specific contribution of the manager/supervisor to the LMX relationship with affective commitment has been the focus of closer study (Eisenberger, et al., 2010). This proposed that, *“employees see supervisors not only as organizational agents but also as individuals in their own right, with characteristics that differ in degree of similarity with the organization”* (Ibid, p 1086). An additional construct, supervisor organizational embodiment, SOE, representing the employee’s perception of the similarity between manager/supervisor and organization, was formulated and measured. Two separate samples demonstrated that SOE moderated the relationship between LMX and affective commitment. The authors offered three potential explanations of why this might be the case; first that employees treated favourably by their manager/supervisor attribute such treatment to the organization and thus feel obligated to the latter, secondly that strong and positive SOE leads to a belief that one has a stronger relationship with the organization and that meets socio-emotional needs and increases identification with the organization, and thirdly that strong and positive SOE enhances the employee’s positive mood at work. While all these mechanisms are couched in terms of the employee’s perception of the manager/supervisor, they offer evidence that what the manager/supervisor does will influence the employee’s OC.

2.5. OC and Theory

It is remarkable how few articles on OC mention any underlying theory, and even more so that those that do mostly rely on only brief references to exchange theories. However, before reviewing the latter, it is also important to acknowledge that many papers encompass other theories, by way of prior mostly unwritten assumptions.

One obvious assumption underlying the whole construct is summed up by the adage ‘man does not live by bread alone’, whose first mention may be in the St James edition of the Bible. Leaving aside its religious context, it describes the need for more than just material returns to generate fulfilment. In a more modern context, it can be reinterpreted as employees seeking to satisfy socio-emotional or other psychological needs over and above the rewards of the strict employment contract. Most studies of OC make this assumption to explain the ‘purpose’ of the attachment of employees to their organization. This assumption rests directly on motivation theory. Many studies implicitly embrace such theory without mentioning it.

One of the few articles that acknowledges OC’s contribution to motivation describes an individual’s need to form connections with individuals and groups as one of four basic drives, and the association of this drive with commitment (Nohria, Groysberg, & Lee, 2008)

Khan's study of the psychological conditions of engagement also starts with the clear statement; *"My guiding assumption was that people are constantly bringing in and leaving out various depths of their selves during the course of their work days. They do so to respond to the momentary ebbs and flows of those days and to express their selves at some times and defend them at others"* (Kahn, 1990, pp. 692-3) This observation reflects the complexity of the motivations comprised in OC and emphasises the need to recall Maslow's observation that, *"any motivated behavior... must be understood to be a channel through which many basic needs may be simultaneously expressed or satisfied"* (Maslow, 1943) Just as OC is a complex construct, it is simplistic to think of OC satisfying just one basic need.

A second theory supporting OC, but rarely if ever mentioned is resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This posits that in order to succeed organizations need to analyse and manage their various external dependencies including on their potential and current employees. Pfeffer highlighted the focus on the latter in an article discussing the effective management of people (Pfeffer, 1995).

A third assumption that touches on theory concerns the 'organization' itself. Two aspects are of concern here. First OC, in common with some other employee-organization relationship concepts, e.g. the psychological contract and POS, presupposes that the organization has a separate identity, leading to anthropomorphization of the organization. The notion of 'bonding' with a non-human entity is a bit of a stretch for some, although it is certainly a convenience in representing the OC process. Whether explicitly stated most articles on OC treat the organization as a partner/person in the relationship.

Secondly, when OC literature refers to the role of the manager/supervisor it invariably assumes that he/she acts as an agent of the 'organization' (agency theory). Sometimes, albeit rarely, the literature also notes that he/she may exhibit an additional self-interest e.g. (Eisenberger, et al., 2010). This duality of role leads to a further ambiguity. If there are two separate commitments that can be experienced by an employee (one to the organization and one to the manager/supervisor), and if also the manager/supervisor in part represents the organization, it will prove difficult to separate out the effects of any manager actions on the employee's perceptions.

Both these assumptions (the organization as person and the manager/supervisor as only an agent) are critically reviewed in (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007). Commenting on employee-organization relationships generally, the authors observe, *"the assumption is made that employees view all possible agents and contract makers... bundled into one 'humanlike' contract maker in such a way that the employee has a relationship with a single entity i.e. the organization"* (Ibid. p167) They go on to argue that the manager/supervisor may be influenced by interests other than those of the organization. They also point out that a good part of, *"the research on agency theory has focused primarily on the behaviour of CEOs"* (Ibid, p 169) and may not be directly relevant to middle management. In essence they question the degree to which either assumption is valid and call for consideration of more complex situations.

Turning to exchange theories, Blau developed social exchange theory and is regularly cited. It is interesting to note his exposition, *"A person for whom another has done a service is expected to express his gratitude and return a service when the occasion arises. Failure to express his appreciation and to reciprocate tends to stamp him as an ungrateful man who does not deserve to be helped. If he properly reciprocates, the social rewards the other receives serve as inducements to extend further assistance, and the resulting mutual exchange of services creates a social bond between the two."* (Blau, 1964, p. 4)

It is no accident that he positioned the relationship as personal and between two individuals. His opening quotation derives from Georg Simmel, a fellow sociologist, and contrasts legal agreements with relationships involving 'gratitude'. This is important because some authors appear to interpret social exchange in a more materialistic and transactional manner than Blau intended. If anything, such interpretations have more in common with equity theory (Adams, 1965) where the impact of 'unequal' exchanges is considered. However, the latter does not appear relevant to considerations of positive attachment as with OC.

Social exchange theory has been used (or assumed) in studies of OC despite the original formulation being based on personal relationships, rather than employee-organization relationships e.g. (Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher, & Hope-Hailey, 2011). Most implicitly or explicitly anthropomorphise the organization and treat OC as a relationship between the employee and the organization.

Another theory occasionally mentioned is the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) Essentially this argues that a relationship between groups and individuals can also be explained as a return of service one for the other and that over time this can support an on-going relationship. This formulation does 'permit' an employee to form a relationship with a group or, maybe, an organization and thus is preferred by some authors e.g. (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986) (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). Nevertheless, there is a strangeness associated with any model that rests on an individual forming a psychological relationship with an entity.

3. The role of the manager/supervisor

It is now appropriate to summarise the main learning from the OC literature. Firstly, despite the quantity of literature, there is only limited mention of the manager/supervisor. In addition consensus on definition is limited and the contributions that there are appear to come from different perspectives. Nevertheless some broad claims have gained empirical support.

Claims	Role, if any, of manager/supervisor	Sample References
OC best viewed as a multi-component attachment between the employee and the organization	Mainly ignored. Where included, viewed as an agent or instrument of the organization	(Meyer and Allen 1991) (Klein, Molloy and Cooper 2009)
OC associated with lower turnover, higher OCBs, better performance		(Cotton and Tuttle 1986) (Meyer, Stanley, et al. 2002)
OC still needed in changed world of work		(Meyer 2009) (Grunberg, et al. 2008)
Several organizational culture aspects influence OC: Clear vision/mission Organizational values		(Taylor, et al. 2008) (Caldwell, Chatman and O'Reilly 1990) (Finegan 2000)
Employee –organization relationships influence OC: HR policies Psychological contract POS		(Taylor, et al. 2008) (Farndale, Hope-Halley and Kelliher 2011) (Rousseau 1989) (McInnis, Meyer and Feldman 2009) (Eisenberger, Huntington, et al. 1986)
Manager behaviors influence OC: Supervisor support Leadership style LMX	Direct and indirect effects on commitment Authentic/charismatic fosters OC Supervisor moderates LMX association with affective commitment	(Kirchmeyer 1995) (Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armell 2001) (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber 2009) (Eisenberger, Karagonlar, et al. 2010)

Fig. 3 Summary of literature findings on OC

Based on the literature, this author proposes the following rationale for further research:

- OC is associated with desirable outcomes that organizations wish to protect/retain or increase especially during periods of change (including but not limited to downsizing)
- The most researched influences (Organizational values, HR policies, POS) are all under pressure for a variety of reasons e.g. diminished commitment to organizational values, limited resources for HR policies – both time and money, and reduced willingness to supply and or promise support aspects like training
- Therefore it is important to use the manager/supervisor relationship with the employee to its utmost to support OC
- However, the mechanisms and processes of this are little understood
- The need is for investigation of what manager/supervisors do that can influence OC

To help develop the research questions it is worth considering levels of interest. The

approach of (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) in dealing with LMX will be adopted. They employed three 'domains' or elements to represent their construct (Follower, Leader and Relationship). In the case of OC there is a fourth (shown shaded in Fig. 4 to emphasise its relative neglect).

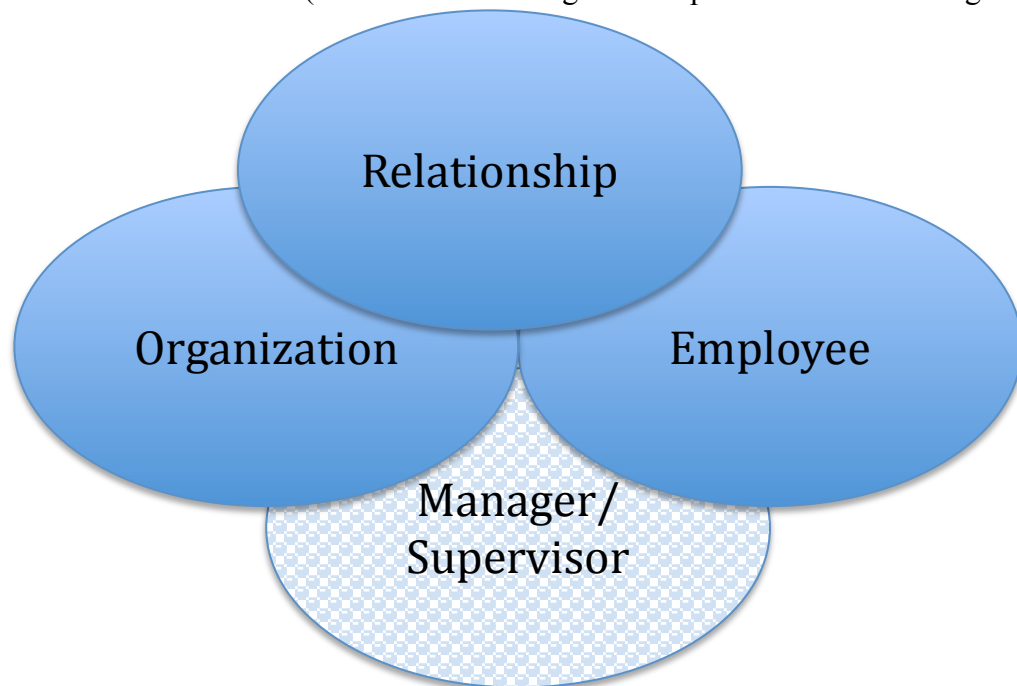


Fig. 4 The domains of OC

Graen and Uhl-Bien made clear that within each domain one could also examine different levels of interest. In a similar way, commitment can be studied within one or more of the domains, and at different levels of interest as shown in Fig. 5.

By way of example Kahn's work on personal engagement represents work in the employee domain and at the level of the individual, whereas (Eisenberger, et al., 2010) study on SOE represents work in the relationship domain (their focus was on LMX/OC), but at several different levels of interest (individual, dyad and organization).

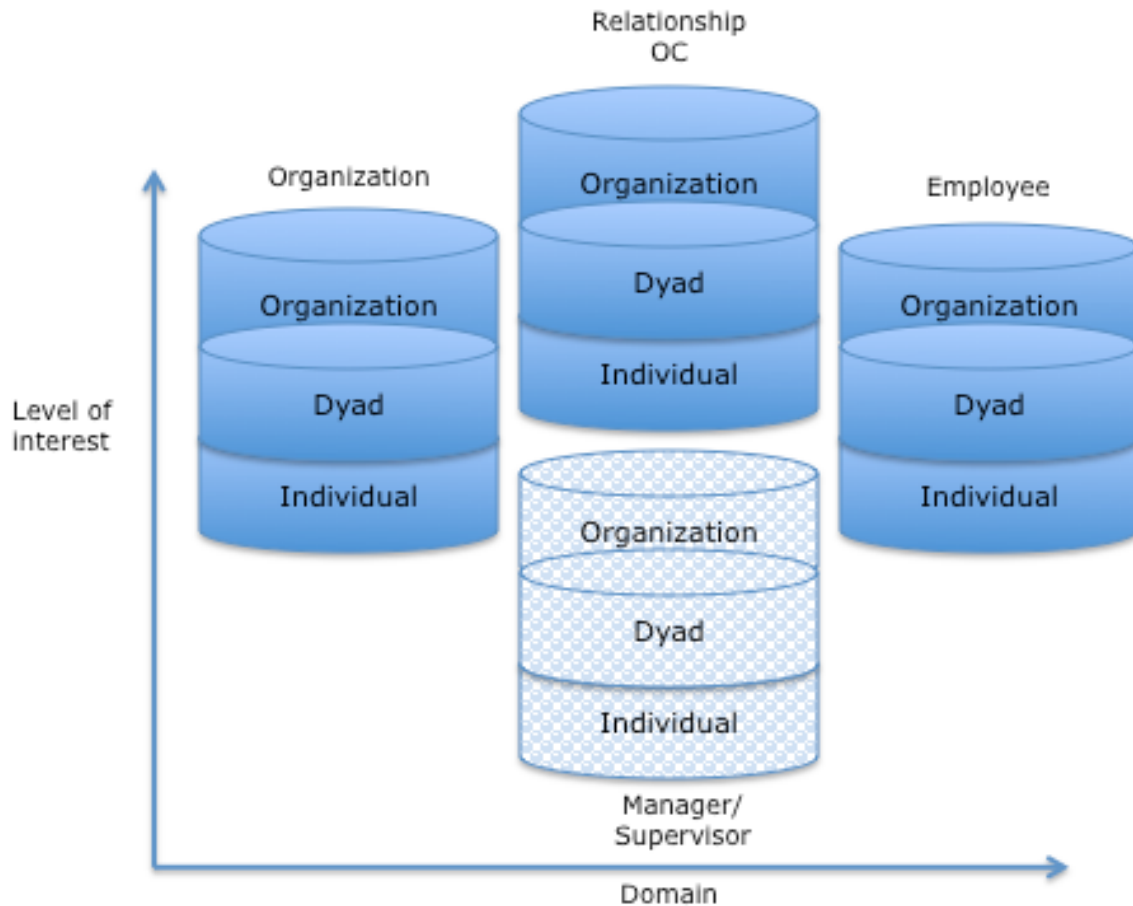


Fig. 5 Multi-level, multi-domain representation for OC

In the case of LMX, Graen and Uhl-Bien argue for more studies that combine multi-domain approaches, as being capable of providing better understanding and practical usefulness. Like LMX, OC is a relationship based construct. Considering it from the point of view of different domains and different levels, although complicated, should benefit the interest of this author in understanding what managers do to influence OC in their direct reports.

Consider a contemporary example, where a manager is concerned to achieve his/her goals including the delivery of targets set by the organization for performance from his/her team. The manager/supervisor will operate within the organization's current situation (likely to include various changes both planned and externally driven) and may be aware that the team is not as committed as desired. What can the manager/supervisor do?

For the sake of this example let us presume that the manager cannot change the organization's values, HR policies and practices, or the behaviors of senior management etc. The tools that he/she can use are constrained within the direct local environment. Then, the manager/supervisor has a number of options. He/she can ignore any commitment issues, can try to raise OC by representing the organization in the best possible light, or perhaps encourage commitment to other targets e.g. job, profession and/or the manager/supervisor to try to achieve the same outcomes by different means. Notice that the second and third options are not mutually exclusive (Fig 6). Evidence from my consultancy experience and work for Assignment II suggests that the use of both options may be common. A particular sub-set are manager/supervisors who perceive the weakening of employee trust in senior management and the organization, who redouble their efforts to secure the employee's trust in themselves i.e. the manager/supervisor.

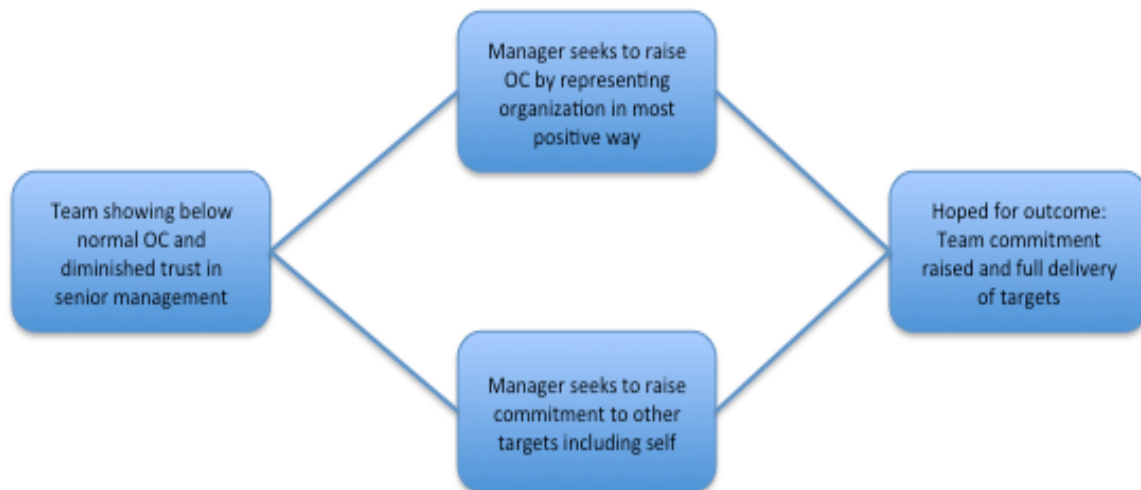


Fig. 6 Manager response to diminished trust in senior management

This example is not meant to suggest how managers can or should manage OC, but rather to outline an area where we do not understand what may be happening and argues for a focus on the manager/supervisor (and at more than one level of interest). This leads to a general DBA research topic of what manager/supervisors can do to manage OC and to a small sub-set of possible research questions:

- 1) How do managers seek to manage their direct reports' OC?
- 2) Are managers' attempts to manage OC influenced by their own OC?
- 3) How are managers' attempts to manage OC viewed by employees?
- 4) Do managers distinguish between trust from their direct reports in them and trust in the senior management?

Providing insight into such questions will assist both managers grappling with the challenge of increased targets and static or reduced commitment, and help senior management deciding how best to retain or restore levels of OC within their organizations. It should also throw light on the processes that help to develop OC.

4. Possible next steps

This section will argue for the use of the first two research questions above, as the basis for P1, but before doing so will consider the issue of causality.

Antonakis et al. (2010) reviewed claims to causality in some detail. Using a rigorous analysis of a random sample of 110 articles on leadership published in the most reputable journals, they found *"methodological practices regarding causal modeling in the domain of leadership are unsatisfactory"* (Ibid. p 1113). Some of the results are startling e.g. some 80% of their sample was judged to exclude important control variables, thus invalidating any claims for correlation (the independent variable is endogenous as it also correlates with the omitted variable). Similarly nearly 60% appeared to have problems with non-representative samples (of which less than a third reported corrections). Although dealing with the specific topic of leadership, they argue persuasively (citing studies referring to other domains) that the problem applies more widely.

It is likely that this problem affects the literature on OC. For example not all of the studies used in this paper stated that they had controlled for variables such as age or job tenure, exceptions included (Buchanan, 1974). In part this may have been due to the mixed nature of previous findings on the significance of such variables i.e. authors assumed they did not matter. Nevertheless, if understood correctly, omitting potentially important variables does not make them vanish. The mere exclusion of potential causal variables (i.e. failure to control for

them) invalidates any observed correlation in the independent variable being tested. This necessarily complicates any attempt to address research question 2, because it means measuring quite a few variables and not just those limited to personal characteristics.

Before considering the proposed research questions it is also appropriate to indicate this author's position on both ontology and epistemology. The terminology used by Blaikie (2009) is adopted. OC is a concept built around individual perceptions (e.g. of the 'organization') and the bond formed by the employee is clearly a personal one. This leads naturally to a presumption of multiple 'realities' and an idealist ontology coupled with a constructionism epistemology. Similarly, the complexity and the limited consensus of the concept, argues for serious consideration of the language and meaning of the social actors (in this case the manager/supervisors) making structuration theory an attractive research paradigm.

The main argument for starting with research question 1 in P1 is the dearth of information on what manager/supervisors do to manage OC. Indeed an admittedly shallow look at some of the wider research on what middle managers do suggests that while job roles (e.g. making plans, analysing information, decision making, managing people) crop up in various forms in extensive lists, much less is reported on what they actually do, one useful critique is (Hales, 2001). Those that venture beyond lists of roles appear to focus on what is done in the course of executing strategy and/or change within the organization and examine aspects of sense making e.g. (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). While useful they do not bear on OC. Before looking further at the manager/supervisor role in OC it is essential to explore what the managers do in practice.

It is suggested that RQ1 ('How do managers seek to manage their direct reports' OC?') can be investigated at both the individual (manager) level and at the dyad level in a case study of manager/supervisors and their direct reports. It is hoped that at least two corporations can be persuaded to participate so as to allow more than one 'culture' to be observed.

In outline the recruited participants would be invited to keep some form of journal over a short period (say 1 month, sufficient time for the manager/supervisor to review each direct report and contribute to the journal, but short enough to avoid loss of engagement in the task) and record their observations on OC in their direct reports. At the conclusion of the observation period they would participate in a one on one 'clarifying' interview (to ensure that the researcher had a clear understanding of the journal's content), and would also be asked to participate in a focus group with other manager/supervisors to discuss their observations. The prior journal completion would help both set the 'agenda' for the focus group and ensure participants had all had an opportunity to consider the topic in advance. The emphasis would always be on what they as managers actually did (examples might include counselling a direct report on potential promotion, addressing a team meeting regarding a proposed change in structure etc.) although inevitably participants' perceptions and interpretations will influence their contributions.

In addition it is proposed that the direct reports would be invited to complete a survey to measure their OC and POS levels, and some personal characteristics. In anticipation of also including RQ2 ('Are managers' attempts to manage OC influenced by their own OC?') in P1, the manager/supervisors would be invited to complete the same surveys, before commencing the focus group discussion. Despite the criticisms of both measurement tools, they are believed to be sufficiently robust to allow a differentiation between individuals in the same context.

This approach has the virtues of minimal intervention by the researcher in 'explaining' the meaning of OC before the sample commence their journals and allowing him to retain some

(slight) detachment prior to both the interviews and the focus groups. Although not relevant to this assignment, it may also be possible to seek to return to the corporation(s) at a later stage allowing the possibility of a longitudinal study.

The output from P1 will provide insights into what manager/supervisors do in managing OC, and has the potential to provide insights into how they view their roles (e.g. primarily as agents of the organization or primarily as independent actors, or some mix of the two). Thus the main contribution to theory will be in understanding how (or if) the OC relationship is viewed as a social exchange e.g. what the current exchanges are seen to consist of.

However, there are some problems with this proposal. At this stage they will be listed only, and further consideration is required before judging whether the obstacles can be overcome.

Potential obstacles:

- I. Measurement
 - Measurement tools – the standard tools (e.g. the three component model (Meyer & Allen, 1997) or the OC Questionnaire (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982)) have been criticized both for how they assess OC and for what in practice is being measured e.g. (Swales, 2002)
 - Assumption of stability of values over time – the “*still photograph*” issue (Kahn, 1990, p. p 693)
- II. Methodology
 - Representative sample – although the main portion of this proposal relies on qualitative methods (only the surveys attempt to gather quantitative data) it is important that the samples are not (knowingly) biased. However, corporate agreement to participate and the sub-sample of manager/supervisors may severely limit the generalizability, if any, of the insights gathered
 - Journal limitations – busy managers over short periods of time may not provide satisfactory levels of detail
 - Focus group limitations – potential for ‘herd’ responses
- III. Conceptual
 - Anthropomorphism – while useful as a shorthand for describing OC it may be less useful in context of this RQ, given some managers view the organization, not as a separate entity, but as a collective of the people in it (author’s Assignment II, Cranfield 2011, unpublished)
 - Assumed correlations – again although this proposal is not seeking evidence of causal linkages per se, it relies on the past literature to provide a framework, when there is some doubt as to its reliability e.g. (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, 2010)
 - Agent or independent – assuming that the manager/supervisor acts as a mixture of both (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007) it will be difficult to accommodate in the analysis of the project output

Despite these potential obstacles it is the opinion of the author that there is both a significant business issue to be examined and a gap in the literature that warrants investigation. Thus the challenge is to formulate a suitably robust project to add to current knowledge.

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B. P1 – Systematic literature review



P1 – Middle Managers’ role in engendering Organizational Commitment

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Submitted by:
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DBA Cohort 2010-14
V3 - 16th August 2012



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Abstract

Organizational commitment has been a topic of interest to management scholars for over four decades. This paper reviews the relevant literature, and what is known about the role, if any, of the middle manager in engendering commitment. The development of the construct and its antecedents and outcomes are discussed. It appears that, among other correlations, higher levels of commitment are associated with lower levels of turnover. Other desirable outcomes include organizational citizenship behaviours.

However, the role of the middle manager in this relationship is not well researched. Such information as is available suggests that the direct reports make judgements and form perceptions of their organization, in part based on their experiences with their middle manager. As well as reviewing what is known about what middle managers actually do, the paper also reviews the theoretical basis for various commitment models, particularly social exchange and agency theories.

Finally, the paper proposes research questions and an outline design to investigate middle manager behaviours in an appropriate case study as P2.

1. Introduction

1.1. Importance of topic

For several decades, many businesses based in developed economies have experienced significant pressures causing them to restructure, downsize and otherwise raise productivity and reduce costs (Cascio, 1993). Such trends have often had an adverse impact on the levels of organizational commitment, OC, among many (but not all) employees (Grunberg et al., 2008). As well as being detrimental to the employees, this is not viewed as beneficial for the organization. Higher levels of OC have been associated with lower turnover rates, better performance and higher incidence of citizenship behaviors (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Meyer et al., 2002). However, the mechanisms of these associations, and the issue of how best to maintain or restore levels of OC are not yet resolved. It would be of benefit to both management practice and academia if more light could be shed on the underlying processes. In particular managers seeking to successfully implement major changes in their organizations would benefit from better understanding how OC could be ‘managed’, assuming for the moment that that is even possible. Authors such as Hales (2001) and Balogun (2003) have made the case that far from disappearing or being an obstacle to progress, middle managers can be seen as significant contributors to the successful implementation of necessary changes in organizations. This makes the middle manager a desirable focus of any study of how OC is influenced.

Following a summary of how the concept of OC has developed and some brief comments on its definition in this introduction (Section 1), the paper continues with Section 2 devoted to the methodology of the systematic literature review (including the literature domains, search terms and protocol, and the quality criteria used), and then Section 3 describing the findings of the review. The paper concludes with suggestions for research questions and preliminary design for an appropriate P2 project in Section 4.

1.2. Development of organizational commitment

Prior to the twentieth century there was no need for a concept like OC. Most workplaces were small, non-standard and with little ‘organization’. Workers generally received little consideration. Even in the first half of the twentieth century, when organizations grew and organizational behaviour became a specific topic of study, most such research dealt only with the design of work processes and organization structures and viewed employees (if at all) like one of the components on the first assembly lines (although some sociologists, for example, examined the power relationships and the work of trades unions). Figure 1 illustrates the context of this development on a number of levels.

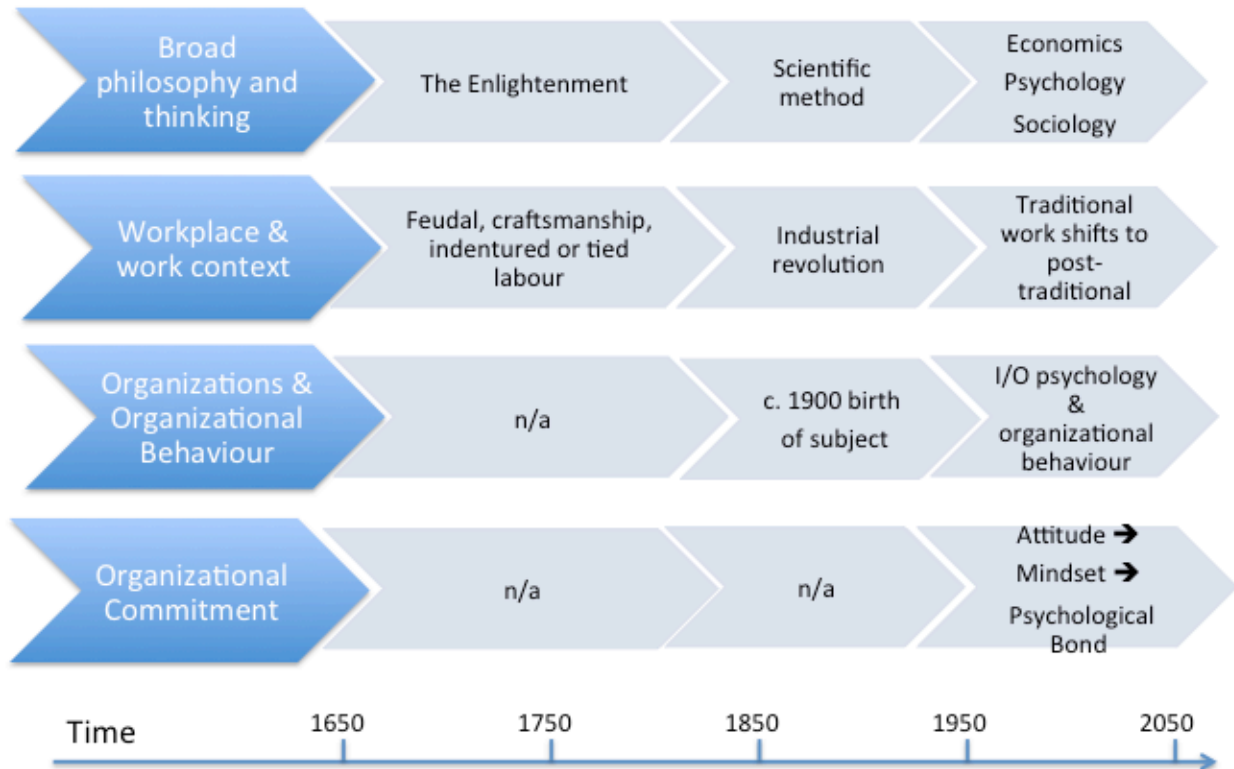


Fig. 1 Schematic development of commitment and the contextual landscape

By the 1950's the pure Taylorism of early I/O psychology was augmented by a greater interest in the worker. Specifically the early commitment authors were interested in how the attachment of workers to their workplace might reduce their intention to quit and result in lower turnover rates. A meta-analysis of this relationship in the mid 1980's included some 13 separate studies (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986).

In the second half of the twentieth century, although the focus was initially on the outcome of turnover, there was a proliferation of views on the concept, on contributing mechanisms and on possible antecedents. This appears to be common with the introduction of ‘new’ concepts into management research. In the case of OC, authors variously considered attachment to multiple aspects (e.g. goals and values) of the organization, the processes by which individuals became committed, and attitudes adopted to gain rewards. These issues will be returned to in detail in Section 3. However, it is necessary to briefly consider the definition of OC here, in order to inform the selection of both the systematic review questions and the relevant literature domains.

1.3. Definition of concept

As noted above there was no clear consensus on what defines organizational commitment. There was also no agreement on how to characterise the concept. For example, Buchanan II (1974) viewed OC as ‘attachment’ to the organization, while Mowday et al. (1982) saw it as a mixture of ‘attitude’ and ‘belief’. In an attempt to unify these and other disparate views Meyer & Allen (1991) proposed a three-component model (for details of this and other definitions see page 9), and introduced the notion of ‘mind-sets’. This paper will later make the case for adopting a more recent definition that views OC as a specific type of ‘psychological bond’ (Klein et al., 2012).

Against this background of an ill-defined concept, researchers proceeded to use various tools to measure OC and to seek its antecedents. Unsurprisingly, these achieved only limited consensus. In addition, most research focused on the individual experiencing (or not) the organizational commitment, and the characteristics of his/her organization. There was very little attention given to the individuals’ managers and what, if anything, they could do to influence OC. This forms the main focus of this systematic literature review.

2. Systematic Review methodology

2.1. Literature domains and review questions

The earlier scoping study identified three broad areas viewed as potential antecedents of OC: the personal characteristics of the individual, the organizational culture, and employee organization relationships (Figure 2). This view should not be mistaken for any sort of causal mechanism. Instead it represents a convenient classification that allows different types of antecedent to be considered separately; namely those that can be best thought of as facets of the specific individual experiencing the commitment, those that can be similarly attributed to the specific organization (part of the ‘way we do things around here’ – the organizational culture), and those that can only be thought of as properties of the relationship between the employee and the organization.



Fig. 2 General format of most commitment models

Thus this review focuses on the domains of Organizational Culture and Employee Organization Relationships, while personal characteristics are dealt with within the domain of Organizational Commitment. Because of the limited material available on middle managers’ influence on OC, it was decided to look more widely into other literature dealing with Middle Management Behaviours. The term middle manager is used in this paper to refer to those managers/supervisors with direct line management responsibility for subordinates, but who are not at a sufficient level of seniority to have responsibility for, or significant influence on, setting the strategy of the organization or other key directional aspects e.g. vision/mission, corporate HR policies etc.

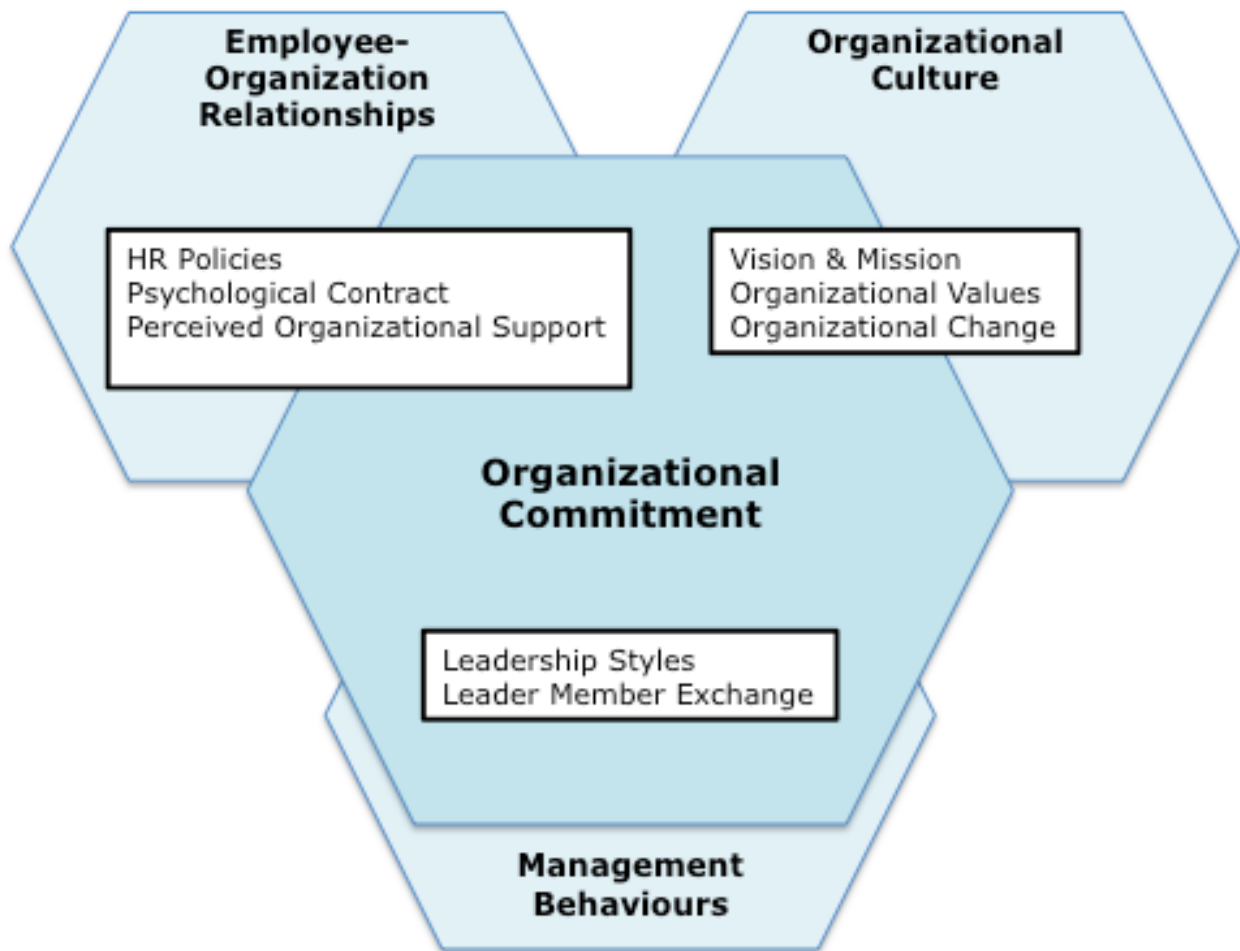


Fig. 3 Literature domains showing some topics of interest

Figure 3 shows some of the specific topics lying in the overlaps between the four selected domains.

One purpose of a strategic literature review is to ensure that any research is grounded in the literature. Another is to seek additional information on those ‘unknowns’ that have been identified. The review question originally proposed was: What do middle managers do that influences OC?

Following discussions, this was modified to yield two separate review questions:

RQ 1: What do middle managers do that influences OC?

This includes three specific sub-questions:

- What do middle managers do to represent the organization to their subordinates?
- What do middle managers do to support their subordinates?
- What theories have been used to explain middle managers behaviours towards their subordinates?

RQ 2: What methods are available to explore middle managers' behaviour towards their subordinates?

It will be noted that RQ 1 relates directly to the actions and behaviours of middle managers, while RQ 2 relates to how one can research such phenomena. Taken together, they explain why a significant proportion of the very large volume of commitment literature can be viewed as non-core. For example, many articles on OC read as though there is no middle manager 'in the room'.

In this review a strategy has been adopted that such 'peripheral' papers are only included where they help advance the desired focus on middle managers. An example of such a paper might be one on organizational values that uses a survey of the reporting managers to ascertain the organizational values. In contrast, the majority of OC articles deploy quantitative methods based on self-reporting surveys that focus on the employee alone, excluding the middle manager. The search terms on methods were selected to include some of the qualitative methods that can involve middle managers.

2.2. The protocol and search terms

2.2.1. Consultation

During this review, a number of people were consulted for assistance in locating relevant materials:

Contribution	Cranfield	External
Academic	Panel members Dr Jonathan Lupson	Prof Julian Birkinshaw – LBS Dr John Rayman - Surrey
Practitioner	10-14 DBA Cohort members	Colleagues: Deanna Brown, Kevin McCourt, Sheila Hirst, Domna Lazidou, Martin West Past Clients: Eric Chalker, Mike Whitlam

Grateful thanks are acknowledged to all of those who assisted in identifying sources and articles relevant to the review.

2.2.2. Search strings

RQ 1 requires a search relating to both middle managers and OC. Regarding the former the term line manager is sometimes used as a synonym and was included. Conversely, the term supervisor was excluded on the grounds that this is more often used as a reference to 'first line' managers i.e. the most junior level of manager and this was not intended as a focus of the review. Following discussion on the difficulty in defining the boundary between middle manager and senior manager, a separate term of senior manager was also introduced to observe the impact on the search. Likewise the particular phrase 'leadership from the middle' was used to seek material from within the much larger leadership literature.

In addition to the term organizational commitment, some authors have preferred the term employee engagement (Kahn, 1990). More recently, the practitioner literature in particular has increasingly adopted this term. While there is no consensus, many regard OC and engagement as

two distinct concepts. For example, the employee survey organization, Gallup, views commitment as an outcome of employee engagement (Harter et al. 2003). Another academic review positions commitment as only a part of what it terms ‘state engagement’ (Macey & Schneider 2008). For this review, the OC search string included employee engagement, although this does not imply a position as to their equivalence.

Because of prior knowledge of at least one article concerning middle managers and their response to organizational citizenship behaviour Shore et al. (1995), it was also decided to include a string relating to OCBs.

RQ 2 requires a search string for methods. In case this did not provide sufficient material (in association with the string for middle managers) and because of specific interest in two techniques, group interviews and journals, these were also included in the string. A summary of the search strings used is shown below.

Search strings	Keywords
SS1 (OC)	“Organisat* commitment” OR “Organizat* commitment” OR “Employee engagement”
SS2a (MMgr)	“Middle manage*” OR “Line manage*”
SS2b (SMgr)	“Senior manage*”
SS2c (Ld)	“Leadership from the middle”
SS3 (OCB)	“Organisational Citizenship Behavio*” OR “Organizational Citizenship Behavio*” OR “Prosocial behavio*”
SS4 (OI)	“Organisational Identity” OR “Organizational Identity”
SS5 (Meth)	“Method*” OR “Group Interview” OR “Journal”

2.2.3. Data sources

The prime target for this review is the peer-reviewed literature, but other printed material, particularly relevant books on the topics, have been used. In addition some conference material and web sources were accessed. The main sources are summarised below.

Data sources	Comments
On-Line:	
EBSCO Bus Source	Wide range of publications. And long history.
Psych Info	Special focus on psychological pubs.
Google Scholar	Often identifies other articles, not in EBSCO/Psych Info
Specific books etc.	
<i>‘Commitment in Organizations’</i> Klein, Becker, Meyer 2009 NY Routledge.	Most recent book on whole field of commitment, by key authors in the field.
<i>‘Commitment in the Workplace’</i> Meyer, Allen 1997 Thousand Oaks CA Sage.	Good review of the early development of commitment
<i>2010 Conference on Commitment</i> , Columbus OH	Proceedings not published, but selected presentations and personal notes retained.
Academy of Management Review and International Journal of Management Reviews	Specific source of reviews covering the topic areas.

2.2.4. Selection criteria

In the initial stage of the review only the title and abstracts were reviewed and broad relevance to the questions assessed by way of the following criteria.

Articles included if one of:	Articles excluded if one of:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to both OC and middle manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers <u>only</u> to not for profits or public sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to antecedent or outcomes of OC and middle manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers <u>only</u> to non developed economies e.g. Asia excl. Japan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to middle manager and behavior/activity that may bear on OC e.g. performance appraisal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers <u>only</u> to first line manager or supervisor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews or critiques OC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers <u>only</u> to other commitment targets e.g. trade union
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to methodologies for observing middle managers 	

2.3. Quality criteria

The articles identified as relevant from the search process were then read in full text. Some of the articles cited in them were also deemed relevant, and added to the pool. Recommendations from those contacted during the review were also added at this stage.

Two other sources were also used; browsing of some of the main journals carrying articles on the topics of interest, and selection from some of the articles previously used in the writer's investigation of OC. Some of the articles from these last two sources did not reappear in the main search process. The reasons appeared to be that the articles were either too recent to have been included in the databases, or that they did not satisfy the search strings, but were still relevant. An example of the latter is the Suddaby (2010) article on construct clarity, used later in discussing the merits of different OC definitions. This process gave a total of 103 articles that were then considered in a second (qualitative) selection. Each article was scored on a scale of 1 to 3 for a number of attributes as shown below.

Article attributes scored for quality test	Other attributes collected
1. Deals with organizational commitment or employee engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title, authors and date of publication
2. Deals with middle or line management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal (or source) and ranking where available
3. Includes theoretical basis	
4. Includes empirical results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative or Qualitative or both
5. Includes methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicability for middle managers

Each of the five ‘scoring’ attributes was rated on a scale of 0 – 3:

0 = Not applicable 1 = Present but poor
2 = Good representation 3 = Excellent representation

To remain included an article needed to clear three hurdles; at least a score of 2 in one of attributes 1 and 2; at least a score of 2 in one of attributes 3, 4 and 5; and a total score of at least 8. Otherwise articles were eliminated at this stage (21 were excluded, while 6 exceptions were retained as the articles dealt solely with relevant theory or in one instance a definition). This left a total of 82 articles for review as shown in Fig 4. The results of the quality filtering are shown in the Appendix.

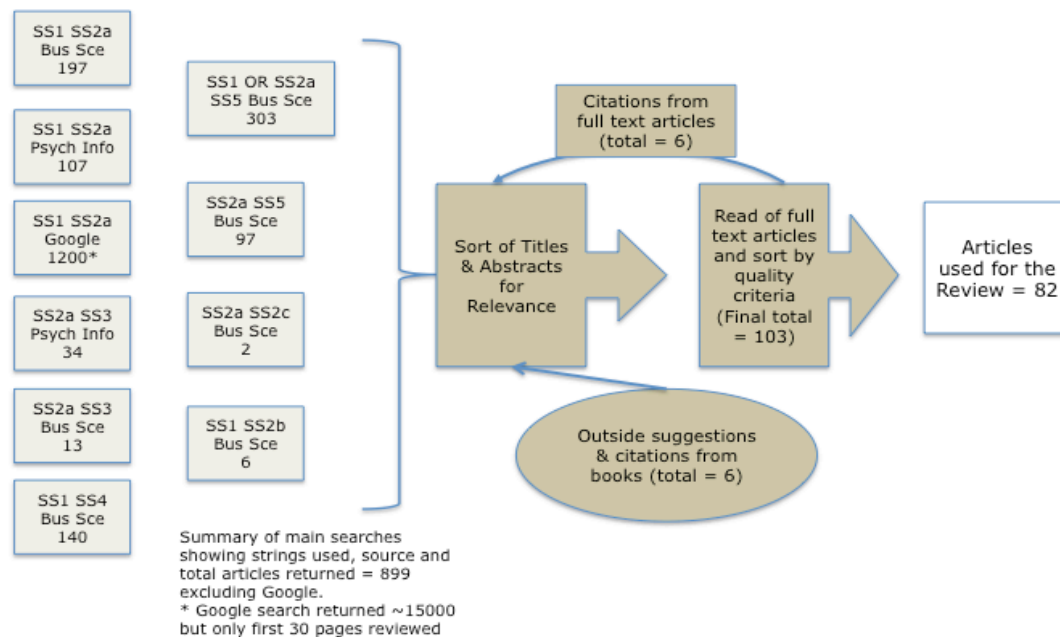
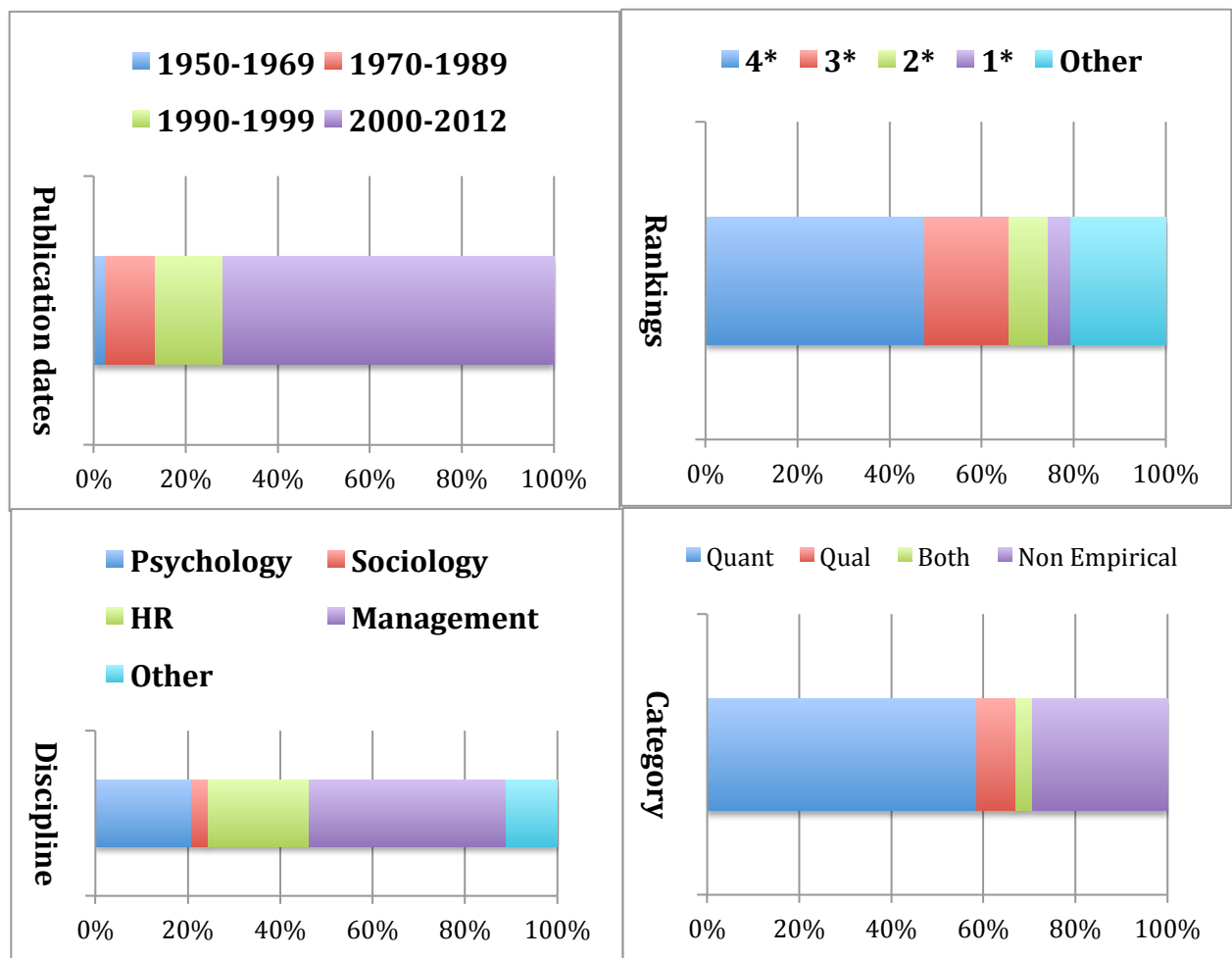


Fig. 4 Summary of the article selection process

3. Findings of the systematic review

This section deals with the main lessons extracted from the analysis phase of the literature review. The extraction process comprised multiple readings of the articles and manual notes on ideas and comments relevant to the review questions. It also allowed recording of certain factual items e.g. the nature of the research design, casework, longitudinal study etc.

Some points of interest emerge from the overall patterns of the total articles selected for this review. First, despite the origins of the subject back in the mid 20th century, the bulk of the articles (over 70%) were published in the current century. This appears to be a function of the early publications’ preoccupation with defining the emerging concept and developing different tools with which to measure it.



As befits a search primarily focused on peer-reviewed literature, nearly two thirds comes from either 3 or 4 star journals. Where a specific discipline is identified most derive from psychology and only a few from sociology. However, the bulk comes either from Human Relations (~20%) or the even more general Management discipline (~40%). It is also apparent that most scholars have taken a positivist approach to OC, as quantitative empirical studies outnumber qualitative empirical studies by a ratio of nearly 7:1.

To aid the structure of the review the main findings are reported below, but not, initially, as responses to the RQ's. Instead they are grouped into four elements of the 'story' 3.1 through 3.5. In the first element, it is clear that definitions of OC have lacked consensus for a good part of the last 50 years and have only recently been reconceptualised. In the second, the supposed antecedents, together with some possible mediating factors and outcomes are summarised. Most descriptions were found to ignore any potential role for middle managers to influence OC. The third sub-section considers the theories that have been advanced to explain how OC occurs. Fourthly, the findings on measurement are considered. Finally the paper attempts to answer the review questions in sub-section 3.5.

3.1. Definitions

In his article on construct clarity, Suddaby suggests three benefits of clear constructs; they aid communication between scholars, help researchers to explore phenomena empirically, and allow for greater innovation (Suddaby, 2010). If this is so, then the development of the OC construct is a poster child for the pitfalls of being unclear. It is only recently that a definition has been proposed that meets most of his criteria for clarity, and communications between scholars have not been easy to follow. At its outset commitment, had more than a dozen distinct definitions. The table below shows a representative sample of them.

Extracts from several definitions of commitment	Reference
<i>1. Commitments come into being when a person, by making a side bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity.</i>	(Becker, 1960 p32)
<i>2. Commitment is viewed as a partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of an organization, to one's role in relation to goals and values, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth.</i>	(Buchanan II 1974, p.533)
<i>3. Attitudinal commitment focuses on the process by which people come to think about their relationship with the organization. In many ways it can be thought of as a mindset in which individuals consider the extent to which their own values and goals are congruent with those of the organization. Behavioural commitment on the other hand relates to the process by which individuals become locked into a certain organization and how they deal with this problem</i>	(Mowday et al., 1982 p26)
<i>4. Compliance occurs when attitudes and behaviors are adopted not because of shared beliefs but simply to gain specific rewards ... Identification, in Kelman's terms, occurs when an individual accepts influence to establish or maintain a satisfying relationship; that is an individual may feel proud to be a part of a group, respecting its values and accomplishments without adopting them as his or her own. Internalization occurs when influence is accepted because the induced attitudes and behavior are congruent with one's own values; that is, the values of the individual and the group or organization are the same.</i>	(O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986 p493)
<i>5. Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization ... Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization ... Finally, normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment ...</i>	(Meyer & Allen, 1991 p67)

The first and third entries seek to define the *process* whereby commitment comes into being, while the others seek to describe the *state* of commitment, whether as affective attachment, attitudes, emotional attachment or simply feelings. Thus there is no consensus on what commitment represents as a phenomenon.

Another point of difficulty with OC definitions is that most seek to embrace a wide range of components within one single construct. For example, the Buchanan definition refers in part to attachment to the “*goals and values of an organization*”. These are two different targets, and an individual might not experience the same level of attachment to both, making the observation of the phenomenon and its measurement problematic.

A more significant problem with the tendency to define commitment, as an inclusive range of 'components' is the grouping together of positive attachments with negative, or at best neutral, attachments. Any definition including both an instrumental relationship where the individual feels constrained to remain a member of the organization (e.g. because of the perceived cost of not so doing), and an attachment arising from positive perceptions of the organization is clearly limited in usefulness. At best it will likely require more than one theoretical basis for an explanation. At worst it will be impossible to measure and or split into observable components. Nevertheless, for many years this 'all in the basket' approach has characterised the definitions of OC.

This confusing scene has not gone unremarked. Early on Buchanan observed: "*There is little consensus concerning the definition of the concept or its measurement.*" [Ibid. p 533] He followed with his own, new proposition. Thirty years later Meyer and Allen described the same problem: "*Among the issues of major concern ... has been the lack of consensus in construct definition.*" [Ibid p 61] Again they followed with their own, new definition. Their three-component model also included both positive and negative aspects (affective equated with 'want to work here' and continuance equated with 'need to work here'), but nevertheless did gain some traction as the preferred definition by many, and also led to the development of a widely adopted survey tool for measuring individual levels of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

However, critical comments have grown louder in the recent decade e.g. (Swailes, 2002). Another critical review judged: "... *continued variation and the absence of consensus on the definition of commitment leads to confusion surrounding the terminology, nature, and function of commitment. We feel the commitment literature has matured to a point where such variation creates more problems than benefits and suggest that it is time to move from variation to selection (i.e. consensus)*" (Klein, Molloy, & Cooper, 2009 p3).

One useful clarification technique is to carefully examine different aspects of the phenomenon and consider a 'model' that envisages potential antecedents and outcomes, the nomological network. This is in line with one of Suddaby's four basic tests of construct clarity, namely the construct's semantic relationship with other constructs (Suddaby 2010). This has been attempted by Macey & Schneider (2008) in the case of engagement, but their model is just as easily applicable to the commitment field (without needing to take a view as to whether or not they are the same construct). The authors distinguish three types of engagement: trait engagement relating to an individual's predisposition, state engagement relating to an individual's psychological state, and behavioural engagement relating to the associated behaviours e.g. OCB's. It then proves possible to characterise earlier definitions of engagement within this structure and, for example, avoid definitions that conflate the pure construct with the outcomes.

Similarly Klein et al. (2009) classified the previous definitions of commitment into eight types. They discarded those types they judged as conflated with antecedents (e.g. definitions involving exchanges like Becker's 'side bet') and those they judge as conflated with outcomes (e.g. definitions involving intention to remain in the organization like Meyer & Allen's continuance commitment). Of the remaining non-conflated definition types, they favoured definitions of

commitment based on the idea of a psychological bond between the individual and the organization.

This process of construct clarification is still a work in progress. Most recently a major reconceptualization of commitment has been proposed (Klein et al., 2012). This distinguishes four types of bond (Fig. 5 overleaf) with the type termed ‘commitment’ being defined as “*volitional*” and experienced as a positive “*embracement*”, but not as a full “*merging of oneself with the target*”. The latter is reserved for the ‘identification’ type of bond. The authors propose that each of the different types of bond “*reflects a distinct psychological phenomena that arise from differing circumstances*” [Ibid. p 133]. However, their reconfiguration presents a number of problems, alongside some clear benefits.

In the first place it is unlikely to provide an early consensus on what should constitute commitment. It will certainly raise questions about how to measure this modified construct, especially given the authors critical review of existing (accepted) instruments.


A Continuum of Bonds				
Bond Differentiators	Acquiescence	Instrumental	Commitment	Identification
Defining feature	Perceived absence of alternatives	High cost or loss at stake	Volition, dedication, and responsibility	Merging of oneself with target
How the bond is experienced	Resignation to the reality of the bond	Calculated acceptance of the bond	Embracement of the bond	Self-defined in terms of the bond
Corollaries of experiencing bonds differently	Low internalization Indifference Psychological withdrawal Low task significance Prevention focus Controlled motivation Minimal effort			High internalization High concern Psychological investment High task significance Promotion focus Autonomous motivation High effort
Alignment of prior commitment conceptualizations				
Kelman (1958)		Compliance		Identification and internalization
Becker (1960)		Sunk costs and side bets		
Etzioni (1961)	Alienative	Calculative		Moral
Kanter (1968)	Control and continuance	Continuance		Cohesion
Salancik (1977)		Behavioral consistency		
Mowday, Steers, & Porter (1979)				Identification and involvement
Brickman (1987)	Have to	Have to	Want to	Want to
Meyer & Allen (1991)	Normative and continuance	Normative and continuance	Affective and normative	Affective and normative

Fig. 5 Commitment Bond (Klein et al., 2012)

Another concern is that like so much commitment literature, this definition is completely focused on the individual experiencing the commitment as the prime (or sole) unit of interest. However, their proposed process model, discussed in section 3.2, does allow for the influence of the middle manager.

One potential benefit of the Klein et al definition of the commitment bond is that it fits some of the empirical research. Thus some single organization studies have observed a minority reporting very high levels of commitment (albeit on the old traditional measures) at one end of the spectrum, an equal or smaller minority at the other end, with the large majority in the moderate to high segment e.g. (Corace, 2007). The group at the higher end might under Klein et al's reconceptualization be seen as experiencing the identification bond. However, it is not clear whether or not individuals are supposed capable of experiencing more than one of the four types of bond at the same time.

Despite the disadvantages, it is proposed to adopt the Klein definition of commitment in the remainder of this paper: *"This perceived bond is a socially constructed psychological state, differentiated from other bonds in that the individual does not psychologically merge with the target but does make a conscious choice to care about and dedicate him/herself to the target. More concisely, commitment is defined here as a volitional psychological bond reflecting dedication to and responsibility for a particular target."* [Ibid. p 137] In contrast readers should be aware that all of the other articles analysed are based on older definitions.

3.2. Possible antecedents of OC

In addition to a clearer construct, the recent Klein article also provides a convenient model (Fig. 6), against which knowledge about the antecedents and other elements of the commitment process can be reviewed.

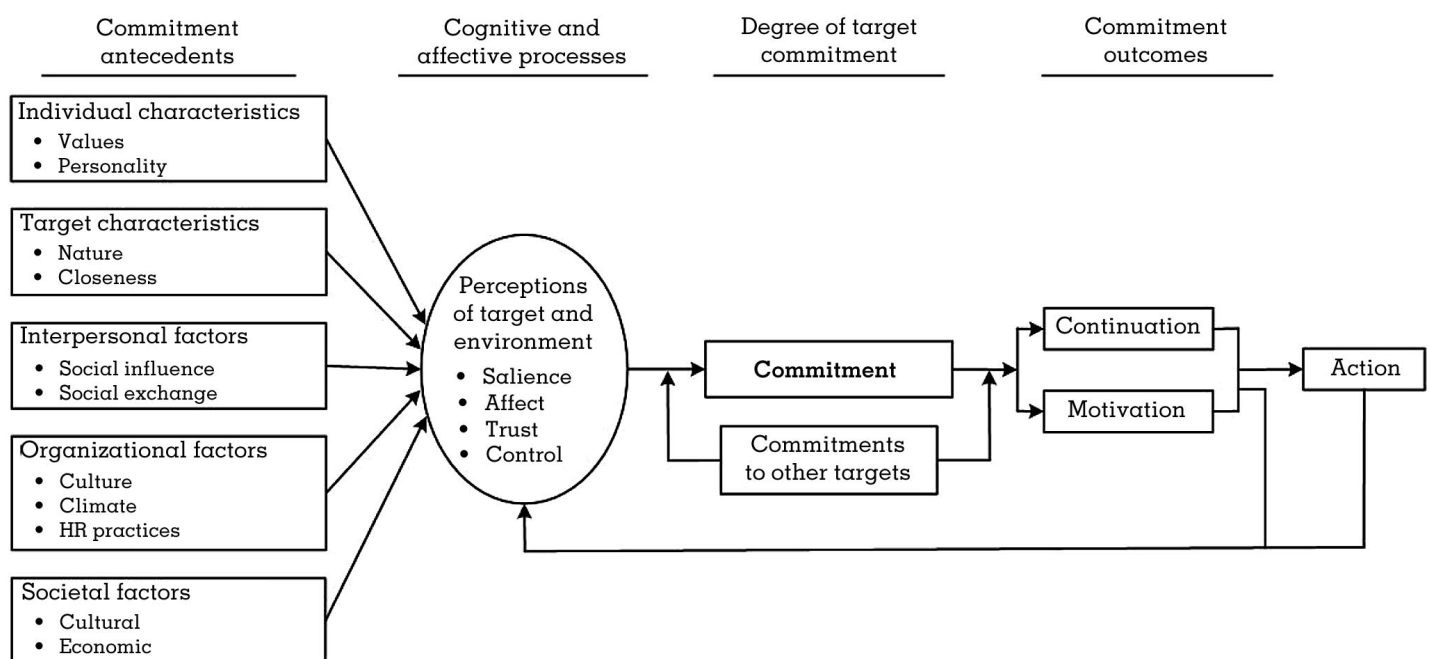


Fig. 6 Process model of commitment (Klein et al., 2012)

Klein et al identify five categories of antecedent, the boxes on the left hand side of the figure. Two of these, the target characteristics and the societal factors, need not concern this review.

Firstly the review is focussed on the subject of commitment to the *organization* (rather than any of the other workplace targets e.g. the work unit, the team, the profession or discipline, or trade union). Secondly, although socialization in early life (e.g. at home, at school, or in a religious community) can affect an individual's values and predisposition to form a commitment, as too can national (or ethnic) culture, the few studies that consider this have shown little impact, possibly because such influence is more distal. The three remaining categories are used below as a framework to discuss the findings on other antecedents.

3.2.1. Individual Characteristics

From the outset researchers have looked for evidence that personal characteristics might be associated with particular levels of commitment. Most concluded that there is only weak or inconsistent correlation with demographic factors such as age and gender (Mathieu & Zajac 1990; Meyer et al. 2002).

Dispositional characteristics have fared better. A few studies have examined the relationship between commitment and the Big Five personality characteristics. For example, Erdheim et al. (2006) predicted correctly a significant relationship between extraversion and commitment. Other researchers have considered the individual's self-identity and regulatory focus (Johnson et al., 2010). They proposed a model that links these characteristics with the different components of commitment (Meyer and Allen version) and reference prior empirical evidence to support their model.

Another aspect of an individual's motivation is that of personal goals and the alignment or otherwise of these with the organization's values. The latter will be discussed in connection with the organizational factors later (3.2.3), but it is worth noting here that one study that examined the aspect of person organization fit, found that the contribution of *personal* values to affective commitment was not significant. Conversely the individual's perception of *organizational* values explained a significant portion of their commitment variance (Finegan, 2000).

3.2.2. Interpersonal Factors

This set of factors comprises the relationships that an individual forms with others in the organization, including work colleagues and the various levels of management. For completeness this section will also include references to employee organization relations. This is considered appropriate, despite the fact that the organization is not strictly a person, because it appears that anthropomorphism is widespread, and because it is the individual's perception of the organization that is found to affect commitment.

Chief among the interpersonal relationships that have been researched is that with the leader e.g. leadership style. Relationships with the leader can refer either to the direct report and middle manager dyad, or to relationships with more distant 'senior' management. The latter operate through a variety of vehicles that are better considered as organizational factors, notably organizational culture, but also including determination of HR policies and practices and the organization's mission. They will be referred to in the next sub-section.

In the case of the direct report to manager relationship, the former's commitment has been shown to be associated with their perceived satisfaction with their supervisor/manager (Jernigan & Beggs, 2005). Likewise the construct of leader member exchange, LMX, relating to the strength of relationship between manager and subordinate Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995) has been associated with commitment. Nystrom examined a sample of middle managers and their managers, finding a positive correlation between OC and vertical exchange (his term for the construct now more frequently described as LMX). This study is relevant not only because of its use of middle managers in the sample experiencing the commitment, but also because it carefully controlled for situational variables (e.g. length of experience, organization size, level of hierarchy – all found to be insignificant) and considered the different situation of middle managers (*"... middle or upper managers have accumulated many experiences with a variety of bosses and jobs. Therefore one would not expect most managers to equate a current boss with their overall organization non reflectively."* (Nystrom, 1990 p.304) Subsequent studies on LMX and commitment demonstrated a variety of levels of correlation, suggesting the possibility of some mediating factor. A recent study proposed and then observed a new construct, supervisor organizational embodiment, SOE. This comprises the extent to which employees identify their managers with the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010). Their discussion explicitly considers the duality of the middle manager being (and acting) as an agent of the organization and being (and acting) as an individual, an issue to be returned to in the theoretical section.

The literature on leadership style also points to correlations with commitment. One review highlights the positive relationship with both 'authentic' and 'charismatic' leadership (Avolio et al., 2009). However, most of the studies concerning the interpersonal relationship between subordinate and manager remain silent on what it is that the middle manager (or leader) is doing, or being seen to do, that might influence the commitment. In a much broader review of manager research Hales observes: *"... reliable evidence on the relationship between managers' behaviour and employees' experience is hard to come by. Studies of manager (or leader) effectiveness attempt to link managerial attributes or behaviour to work group performance without examining the meanings that those being managed place upon that behaviour."* (Hales, 2001 p56) This is certainly true of the commitment literature.

One aspect of the relationship where the direct role of the manager has been studied is that of performance appraisal. The quality of the performance appraisal as viewed by the recipient was measured by reference to four factors, clarity, communication, trust and fairness (Brown et al., 2010) The authors used cluster analysis to show that those experiencing low quality appraisals were likely to have lower levels of commitment. Similarly, in a wider study of factors impacting commitment among a group of managers and professionals, the group was subdivided into high performers and others (by reference to their appraisals). The high performers' commitment levels were found to be more positively associated with the HR policies (including performance appraisals) than were the other performers (Kwon et al., 2010). Also the degree of trust in senior management has been shown to moderate the relationship between quality of appraisal and level of organizational commitment (Farndale & Kelliher, 2013).

While on the topic of appraisal, other studies have explored the manager's rating of the employee's commitment level (more normally measured by means of the subordinate's self-reporting). This showed that the manager's rating was largely associated with the employee's job performance, but was also associated with both the employee's self-rating and with the latter's impression management tactics i.e. ingratiation (Shore et al. 1995; Shore et al. 2008).

The employee organization relationship has been described as "*an overarching term to describe the relationship between the employee and the organization*" (Shore, Porter, & Zahra, 2004 p292). This is a very broad classification and in this review with its middle manager and commitment focus, consideration will be restricted to just two relationships found to relate to commitment (while reserving the bulk of organization factors such as HR practices to be dealt with in the next section).

The psychological contract describes the belief of an individual that over and above their employment contract, there is some sort of additional and voluntary exchange contract or agreement with the organization (Rousseau, 1989). One study determined that commitment levels were higher when the psychological contract was viewed as broad, trust-based, and long term (McInnis et al., 2009). Another showed that in cases involving a perceived breach of the psychological contract, middle manager behaviour (specifically in maintaining a 'fair' environment and fostering high perceived levels of organizational justice) mitigates the negative impact on commitment (Thompson & Heron, 2005). Work showing that perceived employee voice was also associated with commitment extended these findings. Furthermore, the latter relationship was partially mediated by the relationship with the manager (Farndale et al., 2011).

A somewhat similar framework relies on the construct of perceived organizational support, POS, defined as the organization's commitment to the employee as perceived by the latter (Eisenberger, et al., 1986). Unlike the psychological contract, POS focuses on just that part of the relationship where the employer/organization provides 'support' over and above the employment contract. POS was shown to be associated with higher commitment (and job performance), an association hypothesised to result from an obligation to reciprocate the organization's care (Eisenberger, et al., 2001). A third study by Rhoades et al. (2001) included a longitudinal element and concluded that POS was causing the improved commitment observed.

3.2.3. Organizational Factors

To suggest that OC is influenced by organizational culture, or by other organizational factors, is a tautology. Yet this area is fertile territory for research on OC, albeit little of this has been used to study the middle manager. This is a pity as, although senior managers are the prime architects and decision makers of the organizational factors, both their communication and implementation necessarily involve action (or inaction) by the middle manager. This review will attempt to remedy this 'omission' and focus on where organizational factors and the middle manager interact.

One aspect of organizational culture is the organization's vision/mission. Given that some early definitions of commitment referenced identification with the goals of the organization, this too risks producing a tautology. Thus one study of OC in multi national corporations Taylor et al. (2008) investigated the effects of organizational culture in part by measuring the sense of mission of participants i.e. support for the organization's goals, and relating this to the level of commitment. However, the OCQ, Mowday et al. (1979), was used to measure commitment and this contains questions relating to the individuals identification with the goals of the organization. It is therefore in part a self-fulfilling hypothesis. The rest of the study addressed the impact of senior managers' attitudes (both global and geocentric orientations) on OC, and this seems non-tautological. However, problems of this type have fuelled critiques of how commitment is operationalized and then measured (Swales, 2002).

Another feature of organizational culture is the organization's values. Despite facing the same concerns as the vision/mission above, organizational values have been extensively studied and found to be positively associated with commitment (O'Reilly et al. 1991; Finegan 2000). This is unsurprising given commitment's sensitivity to the individual's perception of such parameters as trust and organizational justice, referred to above.

Likewise it is not surprising that organizational commitment appears to be affected by organizational change. Some studies note that commitment levels can fall as a result of radical change e.g. (Grunberg, et al. 2008). An analysis of middle managers' behaviours over three years during one specific case of change concluded that managers both managed their own emotions relating to the change and also were sensitive to, and sought to influence, the emotional state of their direct reports (Huy 2002). It is the latter part of the 'emotional balancing' that throws light on what middle managers can do to influence commitment, albeit care needs to be exercised in distinguishing between commitment to the organization and commitment to the change project itself.

OC has also been examined as a precursor and potential influence on receptiveness or resistance to change (Peccei et al., 2011). This Italian study showed that higher prior OC was associated with a lower level of resistance to change. A longitudinal study of change in a privatised utility supports the conclusion that middle managers perform as 'change intermediaries' and help others, including their direct reports, through the change process (Balogun, 2003). If shown to be more widely applicable, and if middle managers can influence OC, this would represent another significant benefit to organizations. Cascio (1993) in his review of downsizing reported that average management tenure in the US in 1981 was 12 years, but by 1992 this had fallen below 7 years. Thus elucidation of the connection between middle managers and successful management of change might benefit the middle managers themselves.

Another organizational factor thought to be connected with and influenced by middle manager behaviours is human resource management, HRM. Many studies have examined HRM and indeed one aspect of HRM explicitly seeks to encourage high commitment among employees. The use of high commitment HR practices, HCHRP's, has been examined and shown to be associated with higher commitment levels (Farndale, Hope-Hailey, et al. 2011; Kinnie et al. 2005), and to be even more effective with managers and professionals identified as high

performers (Kwon et al., 2010). One specific HCHRP, namely employee involvement and participation, formed part of a longitudinal study that hypothesized that such practices would result in high performance (Parkes, et al., 2007). Although this hypothesis was not supported, the study did find lessons regarding appropriate manager behaviours likely to lead to successful implementation. These included ensuring adequate resources, careful attention to feedback, and simultaneous fostering of a 'trust' culture. A broader assessment sees HRM as providing a strong 'climate' that in turn fosters OC (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Likewise employees' OC levels are shown to be a function of their perceived attribution of the purposes of HR practices (Nishii et al., 2008).

A further study sought to separate out the middle manager's enactment of HR policies, the HR department's performance, and thirdly the manager's leadership/support behaviour towards employees and measure the impact on commitment levels (Gilbert et al., 2011). All three components were shown to contribute to the variance in commitment, and the manager's two contributions (β 's of .19 and .20) had greater effect than the HR department's contribution (β of .27).

In summary all of the organizational factors mentioned in this sub-section (vision/mission, organizational values, organizational change and HRM practices), have been shown to be associated with OC and to possess observed and or potential interactions with middle managers' behaviours.

3.3. Theoretical considerations

Before considering the theoretical underpinnings of commitment, it is worth noting this author's understanding of the construct and his ontological/epistemological approach. This paper adopts the Klein et al definition of commitment as a psychological bond. The phenomenon is viewed as a psychological state. Such a state is internal to the individual, not readily observable, and may be either conscious or unconscious, or a mixture, but to be consistent with the Klein et al definition it is also assumed that some part must be conscious (to permit 'volition'). It further assumes that the relationship that an individual 'forms' with the organization is based on his/her evaluation or judgement about the organization (including what constitutes the 'organization'), and that this judgement will rest in part on the individual's on-going perceptions. This means that there is no specific, let alone single, reality that can be observed by the individual experiencing the commitment (let alone the onlooker). When an employee states (or scores) 'this is a good place to work', this does not equate with a simple tick of a single box; commitment is a more complex state.

None of this is exceptional, and the same framework is applied to a number of the employee organization relationships e.g. POS, and even to other personal workplace relationships e.g. LMX. However, it is worth stating, because a large number of the empirical studies use quantitative methods and operationalize commitment as though OC were something to be measured like a patient's temperature. Both this and the language of such studies are rooted in a positivist viewpoint. Given the lack of construct clarity and the lack of empirical consensus in studies measuring OC, viewing the construct as created by the participants i.e. the individual and

his/her co-workers, and manager may be more enlightening. Adopting an idealist and constructionism stance Blaikie (2007) will facilitate an improved understanding of the role, if any, of the middle manager's influence on OC.

A recent special topic forum on the development of organization theory, in the Academy of Management Review, included the assertion that the majority of theories in use were produced in other disciplines, borrowed and then 'domesticated' (Oswick et al., 2011). The editors of the forum highlighted some of the potential difficulties: *"When we import theories from psychology and sociology, we also import core questions, assumptions, and metaphors, each of which has the potential to create blind spots for management researchers."* (Suddaby, Hardy, & Huy, 2011 p237) It will be seen later that these issues are raised in at least two of the theories relied on in discussions of commitment. Another contribution to the same forum is also relevant to commitment theory. Boxenbaum and Rouleau examine the different ways in which organization theory is developed and in particular the use of different 'scripts' in the production of the theory (the cognitive process) and the presentation of the theory (the writing process) (Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011). In particular they suggest that theories produced under a 'bricolage script' (combining elements from different disciplines) are rarely presented as such, because that process is controversial and unorthodox. Instead such theories are presented under more traditional scripts.

Clearly commitment bears some relationship to motivation, although most research on OC is silent on this. This may be because it is not clear what the relationship might be i.e. is commitment a precursor of motivation, or vice versa? One view distinguishes four drives that constitute motivation. One of these is the drive to bond; fulfilling this drive was found to be associated with (led to) high commitment (Nohria et al., 2008). However, a critique of much motivation theory has criticised the (too) individualistic approach that portrays the individual as a *"rational maximiser of personal utility"*. (Shamir, 1991 p406) Part of his critique relates to the omission of values and moral concerns from many such theories, relying instead on a simple (or simplistic) process of seeking reward from need or goal fulfilment. Perhaps his most cogent criticism as far as commitment is concerned is that motivation theories cater better for specific acts and less well for patterns of behaviour that extend over time. Commitment is certainly viewed as an on-going state, resulting in patterns of behaviour e.g. OCB's, and if there are 'rewards' they are not necessarily contemporaneous. Fortunately, a model of commitment need not rest on a particular view of what constitutes motivation. This paper does not take a view on the relationship between commitment and motivation.

The central plank of most commitment articles (however positivist their approach) is social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). This is a theory imported from sociology and as originally proposed it did not relate to the context of OC. *"The purpose of the intensive analysis of interpersonal relations is not ... nor is it to search for the psychological roots of human direction, but it is to derive from this analysis a better understanding of the complex structures of association among men that develop."* [Ibid. p 2]. So, as mentioned above, different core questions, assumptions and metaphors were used. This does not invalidate the migration of the theory, but necessitates caution in how it is applied. For example, the prior basis was the interpersonal relationship, which must now be extended to an employee organization relationship.

Also Blau clearly distinguished social exchange from economic exchange by the former's unspecified obligations and the requirement of trust between the participants. Thus application of social exchange theory to commitment requires an acceptance of both unspecified obligations on the individual (from the organization), and mutual trust. Both assertions lead inexorably to anthropomorphism.

This is discussed in some detail in a more general review of employee organizational relationship theory (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007). The authors suggest that personification requires that employees attribute some of the behaviours of representatives of the organization as being carried out on behalf of the organization. They go on to observe that this leaves open the question of which representative(s) are so designated, and suggest research is required into this and other issues. However, they do discuss the role of middle managers and how they may have interests over and above those of the organization. They also question whether or not the norm of reciprocity Gouldner (1960), a concept at the core of social exchange theory, is sufficient to explain observed behaviours. Like Shamir they question the reliance solely on rational self-interest and mention: "a complementary relational framework based on employees' concern for the organization" [Ibid p 170]. It appears to this author that the complaint about over reliance on rational self-interest refers to how the theory has been domesticated in the management literature, and does not reflect the intent of the original e.g. Blau's distinction between social and economic exchanges referred to above. It seems sensible to limit the meaning of social exchange theory to its original meaning where the 'social' did not include purely material/instrumental exchanges. These after all are the basis for the separate 'employment' contract. However, it is accepted that the subject experiencing the bond need not make such fine distinctions. This debate about rational/instrumental versus social interpretations of behaviour goes far wider than social exchange theory. One early contribution to the debate again from outside the management domain concerns the degree of embeddedness of economic activity in the social structure (Granovetter, 1985). He concluded that economic behaviours must be examined with a balance between the purely economic and purely social views to avoid over-simplistic conclusions. The debate continues today in the area of commitment e.g. as to the explanation of OCB's. This boils down to whether or not there is such a thing as selfless or altruistic behaviour. Social exchange theory would seem to assume that there is. How it arises is of less (but not zero) concern to those interested in determining if and how it can be managed.

Another theory that can assist in understanding commitment and the middle manager role is agency theory. This theory is also imported, this time from economics, and was largely thought of in a neo-classical sense with the agent's self-interest leading to opportunistic behaviours not necessarily in the interest of the principal. This led to most early research in management focussing on the behaviour of CEOs in relation to the needs of their owners, and the consequent concerns over their personal enrichment and inadequate governance (Eisenhardt, 1989). However, this context is narrow and has been extended to apply to the broader context of delegation where the principal may have differing goals and there is limited information availability (Wiseman et al., 2012). In this situation, the agent (say the middle manager) need not be assumed to be following divergent goals, but may have different information and attitudes to the means-ends trade offs and behave differently to the principal's (say senior management) expectations.

Equally this does not preclude a mix of organizational and personal goals, leaving the interesting question of what the employee makes of such behaviour. Eisenberger et al's work (2010) suggests that the middle manager's goals may be an important mediator for the OC of his/her direct reports via SOE.

Although the antecedents of commitment derived from the literature review were reported according to the Klein process model (Fig. 6, p 15) that model does not easily represent the theory or the observed interactions with middle managers. As just one example Klein et al view motivation as an outcome of commitment. This review found little information on this proposition and prefers to omit motivation from any model. A suggested framework for explaining the potential roles of middle managers is shown in Fig. 7, wherein some of the antecedents of OC are shown to have two viable pathways to commitment, one direct and one via middle manager behaviours. This has the merit of being simpler to display and also to be consistent with the thinking in both social exchange theory and agency theory as applied to the manager.

Thus the values, the vision/mission, and the HR policies of the organization may have a direct effect on the individual's OC (Path 1), or an indirect one mediated by the middle manager (Path 2). In addition the middle manager may have a direct effect on the individual's OC (e.g. via leadership behaviours) and/or moderate the direct effects in Path 1 (both depicted by Path 3). Again it must be emphasised that this is purely a framework for discussing the phenomenon, as the evidence of any causality is at best patchy.

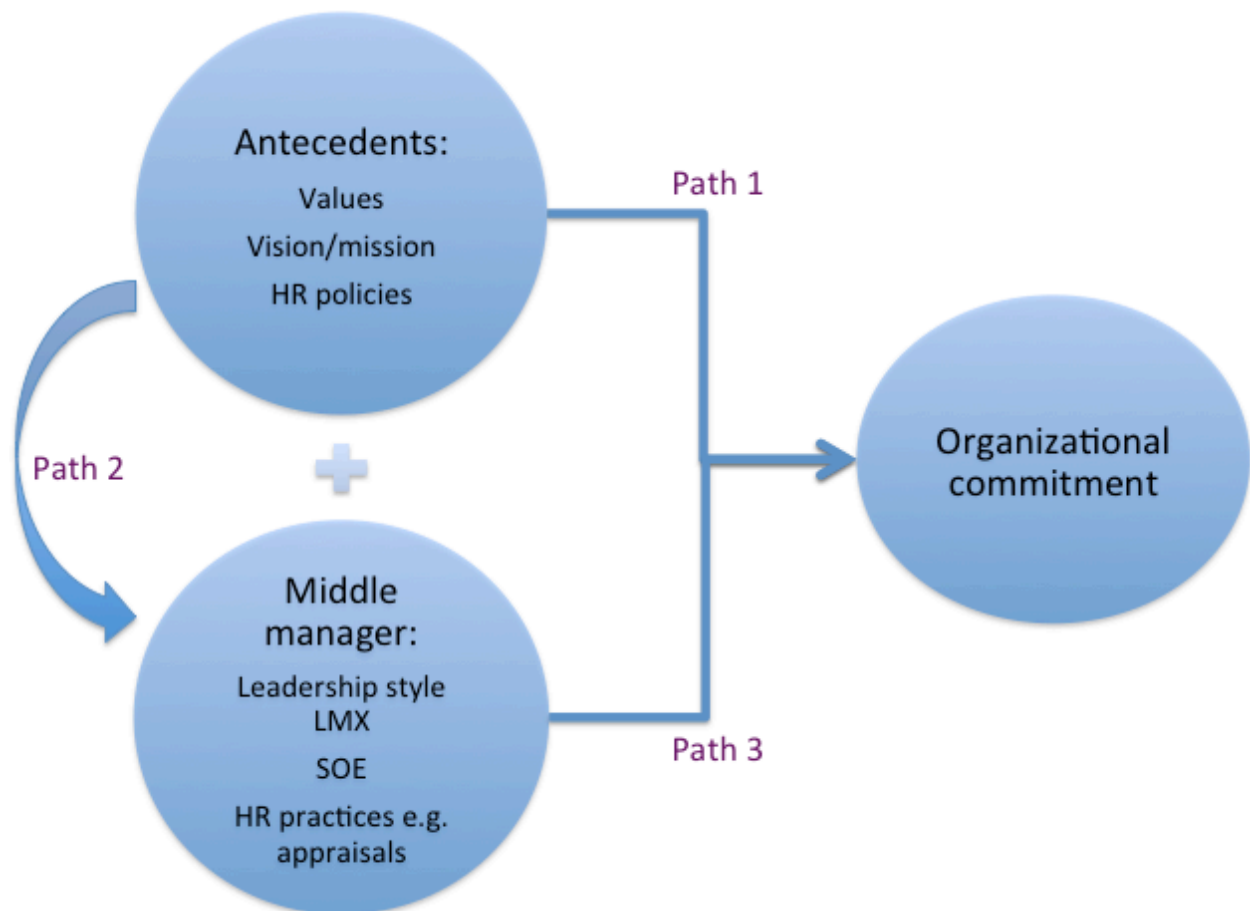


Fig. 7 Framework of middle management interactions and commitment

A model somewhat similar to this has been used in a study of transformational leadership (Hoffman, et al. 2011). The authors sought to distinguish between the pathway from the leadership behaviour to work group effectiveness dependent on the individual's congruence with the organizational values, and the pathway dependent on the individual's congruence with their leader/supervisor's values. They found that the former was by far the major factor, lending some support to the previously mentioned notion of SOE. In contrast, another similar model, seeking to evaluate the impact of perceived investment in employee development, PIED, and perceived supervisor support, PSS, on commitment, found that PSS was the key factor (Kuvaas & Dysvik 2010). Whatever else it appears that the theory underpinning commitment must allow for multiple pathways.

3.4. Methodological considerations

As already mentioned, there has been criticism not only of the older definitions of commitment, but also of their operationalization and measurement in quantitative techniques e.g. (Swales 2002). His concerns include:

- The definitions are so broad that the resulting employee surveys are ambiguous in what, if anything, they are measuring

- Survey questions uniformly refer to the ‘organization’ without any attempt to identify what the respondent understands by the term, and
- Antecedents and outcomes are often conflated with the construct e.g. by including questions on intention to quit

Put bluntly, one does not know what it is that is being measured. Additionally the design of most of the quantitative studies of OC are cross sectional and at best can measure only an association or correlation between any two variables. A study in 2010 could only locate some 55 studies with measurements of commitment at two points in time, where the longitudinal design might provide evidence of causality (Morrow, 2011). Many of these were inconclusive. And yet much of the literature refers to causality and or offers an explanation of why commitment levels are as high or as low as they appear. While this is not unusual, it does not instil confidence in the findings.

A rigorous analysis of over 100 articles in the leadership domain, published in the most reputable journals, found a mix of unsatisfactory research designs, methods and reports, such that 80% were judged to omit important variables, while nearly 60% appeared to have used non-representative samples (Antonakis, et al., 2010). They also argued (citing studies of other domains) that such problems are widespread.

The bad news is that there appears little good reason to rely on the findings of these quantitative studies. The good news is that there appears little good reason not to rely on them. In the articles selected for this review, overall some 60% offered quantitative results, and 10% offered qualitative results (with 30% offering no empirical results, and a mere 3 articles with a combination of both qualitative and quantitative results). Even this probably underestimates the contribution of quantitative studies in the literature, given the focus and selection used here.

Turning to qualitative studies although fewer, they comprise a number of approaches. An early study of the psychological conditions for personal engagement at work, comprised two separate case studies, the first as both a participant and an observer in a summer camp, and the second as an outside researcher at an architectural firm (Kahn, 1990). The two, contrasting, situations were designed to allow a grounded theory approach and resulted in proposed interpretations of the differing impacts “*meaningfulness, safety, and availability*” have on individuals’ engagement or disengagement [Ibid p 703]. Interviews were transcribed, repeatedly analysed, coded and reduced to key themes. However, using either the participant or the researcher approach with middle managers is more difficult, because of their limited availability and the complexity of levels of seniority present in ‘in situ’ activities.

In a more recent four-case study undertaken in the UK Gifford et al. (2010), the authors used a series of focus groups composed of front line employees and first line managers in several organizations. They highlighted that the use of focus groups, rather than interviews, not only provided a range of ideas but also allowed observation of how different views interact. Again application of the focus group techniques can prove somewhat problematical with middle managers. At minimum it is likely to require inviting more subjects than are desired to allow for no-shows. A ‘halfway house’ – small group interviews – will be discussed later.

One successful use of focus groups and a mix of one on one interviews with more senior employees (including middle managers) studied the behaviour of ‘boundary spanners’ in change situations (Balogun, et al., 2005). Interestingly they report considering (but discarding) additional techniques such as diaries and participant research. In the event they used their focus groups across more than one organization (as their interest was primarily in the boundary spanning practices). By incorporating a number of organizations and sufficient respondents in each, it proved possible to complete the study despite some loss of respondents over time. In a different study, diaries completed by the middle managers were used as a basis for exploring their sensemaking during a period of change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). Specific questions were introduced in a briefing session and subsequently diary responses were collected initially fortnightly but subsequently on a monthly basis. Both telephone follow up and interviews with individual diarists were also used. Finally participants were brought together in focus groups to discuss their experiences.

One on one interviews do not suffer as much from dislocation by non-attendances, although experience with middle managers suggests that they often need to be rescheduled to ensure that sufficient respondents are eventually interviewed. Wreder (2007) investigated managers’ approaches to health and health promotion in the retail operations of a major Swedish bank at three levels of management. Using a series of one-on-one interviews, he was able to analyse the successful practices.

Taking these issues into account together with the interest in the middle manager suggests a mix of interviews, most probably group and one-on-one, together with other methods e.g. journals, will provide a rich source of information.

3.5. Answers to the review questions

This section summarises the findings of the literature review in terms of the review questions.

RQ 1: What do middle managers do that influences OC?

This includes three specific sub-questions:

- a. What do middle managers do to represent the organization to their subordinates?
- b. What do middle managers do to support their subordinates?
- c. What theories have been used to explain middle managers behaviours towards their subordinates?

The literature suggests that middle managers represent the organization to their subordinates by ‘walking the talk’ (or not so doing). Subordinates are thought to form their perceptions of the organization in part by the example of their manager. In particular POS appears to be affected by what Eisenberger has termed the supervisor organizational embodiment (Eisenberger et al., 2010). However, the view of the organization is not identical with their perception of the supervisor. For example, the employee’s views of the values of the organization and the vision of the organization are found to be associated with commitment, not their views of the supervisors’ values etc. Thus it is possible that the employee uses the manager as part of their sense making process. So managers may be supporting their subordinates in part by being an interpreter or

scene setter in relation not just to task expectations, but also in relation to the organization's culture and wider context. Separately they appear to help create a climate of trust/fairness that in turn supports the development of OC.

The main theories used to explain commitment and the middle manager's behaviours rest on social exchange and the assistance they can provide in providing non-material benefits to their subordinates (e.g. in discharging HR functions such as appraisals, development and coaching, plus recognition of their achievements). Separately the managers are supposed to act as agents of the organization (in line with agency theory), providing potential for conflicts of interest and ambiguity in their approach.

Many of the quantitative findings on OC remain tentative or qualified because there are real questions about the data and the observed correlations and what they mean. However, there is sufficient association between the variables to suggest that the broad direction of the findings, if not the specific detail, is correct. Irrespective of their magnitude, it is argued here that only greater attention to qualitative research will help to better explain OC and particularly the role of middle managers.

RQ 2: What methods are available to explore middle managers' behaviour towards their subordinates?

The caveat at the end of RQ1 above lends weight to the use of more qualitative measures in order to attempt to understand better how the middle managers deal with the phenomenon of commitment/engagement. By listening to their descriptions and vocabulary and hopefully their discussions with each other one can hope to better understand their frameworks and identify their practices.

4. Proposals for P2

4.1. Research questions

From the outset the focus of this research has been on what middle managers can do to influence the commitment of their direct reports. One thought arising from the review is that there may be a useful distinction in what managers do, between form and content, or task and process. Thus the manager may on the one hand simply perform certain tasks that may enhance commitment e.g. nominate a training/development opportunity, give public recognition, or articulate how the subordinate's contribution fits into the organizations vision/mission. On the other hand they may also enhance commitment by the style or manner in which they behave when performing their role e.g. giving 'helpful' performance feedback, showing understanding of workplace pressures, engaging positively in non-work related conversation. The first category can be observed as delivered or not, while the second must be judged subjectively, and will be, not least by the subordinate. The distinction could account for some managers being viewed as more effective than others. For example, in many organizations certain HR practices e.g. performance appraisals are required of all direct reports by all middle managers; most comply but some managers may just 'go through the motions', while others treat the task seriously.

Another thought prompted by the review is the agenda of the middle manager in any consideration of their direct reports' commitment. The manager may have a variety of purposes in seeking to improve OC. Some relate to the needs of the organization and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals, some relate to the needs of the direct reports and contribute to the achievement of their personal goals, and some contribute to the needs of the manager and contribute to the achievement of his/her goals. In an ideal world these separate interests might be identical, or at least aligned. However, that is unlikely in reality and the trade offs will influence how important the manager views commitment enhancement.

One contribution to learning would be to identify what middle managers make of OC; do they give it any consideration, identify the levels in their direct reports, see its maintenance or improvement as part of their responsibility, have any practices or techniques they use etc. This leads to the following proposed research questions:

1. What, if anything, do middle managers understand by terms such as organizational commitment, engagement?
2. What signs do they look for to assess the level of connection between their direct reports and the organization?
3. How do middle managers view OC as being influenced?
4. Do middle managers believe they can influence OC, and if so how?

4.2. Target cases

Organizations need to be of a certain scale before the distinction between senior managers and middle managers has significance. Furthermore, if one is interested in the potential variation between different middle managers, an organization with more than say a dozen middle managers is desirable as a target for this research. Assuming an average span of control of around 10, this suggests a lower limit of size for the organization of several hundred employees.

Likewise most of the existing work on commitment relates to commercial concerns, and a substantial part of the relevance of the topic to practice presumes a commercial context. For these reasons the target area is an organization in the for profit sector, rather than in the not for profit or public sectors. As a practical consideration, both logistical and linguistic, it is proposed to limit fieldwork to the UK and the USA. At this stage no specific exclusions are proposed on the basis of industry classification although it is recognized that issues of commitment can be very different in organizations with very high proportions of staff in front line customer contact positions e.g. retail, travel and leisure etc.

4.3. Proposed design

A three-stage process over 2/3 months is proposed within a single organization (albeit potentially on more than one site), where a sample of 10 – 20 middle managers will be studied. A single organization is preferred to reduce (but not eliminate) variations in key organizational factors thought to impact commitment e.g. vision/mission, organizational culture and values, and HR policies.

It is proposed to carry out the study partially at two levels of interest, that of the group in relation to the (average) level of commitment of the direct reports and that of the individual. The former group level assessment would be solely to allow classification of the individual middle managers as managing a broadly high (or low) commitment team of direct reports, and not for more conventional quantitative analysis.

The sample of middle managers will be selected in cooperation with the organization's senior HR personnel, seeking a spread of managers across the organization. Agreements will be required on what levels should be excluded as 'senior' management and whether or not to include connected peers i.e. middle managers having regular and significant work relations.

Essentially the manager sample will be interviewed in phase 1 in relation to the first two research questions (how they view the concept and what signs they look for in their direct reports) and briefed on phase 2. At the same time their direct reports will be surveyed to assess their commitment levels (solely in order to be to classify their managers as 'high' or 'low' commitment managers). In phase 2 the sample will be asked to keep individual journals/diaries, recording their observations on their own unit's commitment experiences over a month to six weeks. Entries will be collected once every two weeks and used to prepare for Phase 3. Phase 3 will comprise group interviews of the managers and will focus on the third and fourth research questions. The group interview comprises two managers from the sample and the researcher, and is preferred over a focus group for three main reasons:

- The presence of a colleague should limit nervousness and encourage discussion of real experiences in the local language i.e. using their own vocabulary
- In practical terms such group interviews are somewhat easier to arrange than focus groups and provide more discussion on topic
- The researcher is under less pressure to intervene and 'guide' the interview e.g. asides to the non-speaking participant "What do you think of such and such?" can maintain the flow in the preferred direction

It is also thought that the entries into a journal prior to phase 3 will help prepare the participants to display a considered review of their thoughts.

Naturally all of the above is subject to finding a suitable organization to cooperate during the desired timescale. The latter is provisionally assumed to be during the period October 2012 – January 2013. It is also subject to receipt of ethical approval and the comments of the panel.

5. Appendix – quality filter

Entries in red are those excluded by virtue of having scored less than 8 points. Six exceptions (i.e. included, although scoring less than 8) are shown in green.

Author	Year	Publication	Abbreviated Title	Inc Com/ Eng	Inc Md mgt	Inc Thy	Emp res	Inc Meth	Tot (0- 15)
Antonakis	2010	Ld Quart	Making causal claims		1 2	2	2	2	9
Avolio	2009	Ann Rev Psych	Ldship current theories		2 2	2	1	2	9
Balogun	2003	Brit Jnl Mgt	Blaming middle to harnessing		2 3	2	2	2	11
Balogun	2005	Brit Jnl Mgt	Managing Change across Boundaries		1 3	2	3	3	12
Balogun	2004	AoM Jnl	Restruct & MidMgr sense mkg		1 3	2	2	2	10
Bassett-Jones	2005	Jnl Mgt Dev	Hertzberg Thy staying power?		1 2	2	1	1	7
Becker	1996	Am Jnl Sociol	Notes on Comm (abst)		3 2	2	0	0	7
Blaikie	2007	book	Approaches to social enquiry		0 0	2	0	0	2
Blau	1964	book	Exchange & power in social life		2 1	3	0	0	6
Bowen	2004	AoM Rev	Understanding HRM 'strength'		1 2	3	0	1	7
Boxenbaum	2011	AoM Rev	Bricolage Theory devt		1 2	3	1	1	8
Brown	2010	Pers Rev	Consequences perf appraisal		2 2	2	2	2	10
Buchanan	1974	PubAdminRev	GovMgns BusExecs & OC		3 2	2	1	2	10
Cascio	1993	AoM Exec	Downsizing: what do we know		2 2	0	2	2	8
Clarke	2011	Brit Jnl Mgt	Analysing Talk in mgr mtgs		1 2	1	2	1	7
Cole	2006	Jnl Org Beh	OI str OI & OC reln T/O intent		2 2	1	1	1	7
Corace	2007	Org Dev Jnl	Engt enrolling silent maj.		3 2	1	2	1	9
Cotton	1986	AoM Rev	Employee turnover meta anal		2 1	2	2	1	8
Cox	2009	Int Jnl HR Mgt	Emplnv instit. Embeddedness		3 3	2	2	2	12
Coyle Shapiro	2004	JnlMgtStudies	OCBs & Reciprocity		2 2	2	2	2	10
Coyle Shapiro	2007	HR Mgt Rev	EOR Where do we go from here?		2 2	2	1	1	8
Dorenbosch	2006	Mgt Revue	Link Line-HR cons & C strength		1 2	2	2	2	9
Eisenberger	2010	Jnl App Psych	LMX & AOC supervisor SOE		3 3	3	2	2	13
Eisenberger	1986	Jnl App Psych	POS		3 2	2	2	2	11
Eisenberger	2001	Jnl App Psych	Reciprocation of POS		3 1	2	2	1	9
Eisenhardt	1989	AoM Rev	Agency Theory		1 2	3	1	1	8
Ekaterini	2010	Int Jnl Bus & Mgt	Ldsh Style & OC Jsat ...		2 2	1	1	1	7
Erdheim	2006	Pers & Indiv Diff	Big 5 Personality & OC		2 1	2	2	2	9
Farndale	2011	HumRes Mgt	PEVoice & OC exch persp		3 3	3	2	2	13
Farndale	2011	Pers Rev	HCHRP's role of justice/trust		3 2	2	2	2	11
Farndale	fthcmng	HumRes Mgt	Perf App trust and OC		3 3	2	2	1	11
Finegan	2000	Jnl OccOrg Psych	Person & org values OC		3 2	2	2	3	12
Gifford	2010	Roffey Park Res	Human voice of Emp Eng		3 3	1	2	2	11
Gilbert	2011	Int Jnl HR Mgt	Infl LineMgns & HR on AOC		3 3	2	2	2	12
Gouldner	1960	Amer Socio Rev	Norm of reciprocity		2 1	2	0	1	6
Graen	1995	Ld Quart	LMX & levels		1 3	3	2	2	11
Granovetter	1985	Amer Jnl Sociology	EconAct...Prob Embeddedness		1 2	3	0	0	6
Grunberg	2008	Jnl AppBehSci	ChangWkPlace longit OC		3 2	1	3	3	12
Hales	2001	Bus Strat Rev	What Managers do		1 3	2	1	2	9
Harley	2005	Strat HR Rev	O2 & engagement		2 2	1	1	2	8

Harter	2003	book sect	Well being Gallup studies	3	2	1	1	1	8
Hoffman	2011	AoM Jnl	PersOrg Val Congr & Transf Ld	2	2	2	2	2	10
Holtom	2008	AoM Annals	T/O & Retention Research	1	1	2	1	1	6
Huy	2002	Admin Sc Quart	Emot. Balancing org cont &	2	2	1	2	2	9
Jernigan	2005	Jnl App Soc Psych	Satisfact with Sup & OC	3	2	2	2	2	11
Johnson	2010	AoM Rev	Comm emp identity & regulatory	3	1	2	0	2	8
Kahn	1990	AoM Jnl	Psych Conds of engagement	3	2	3	2	2	12
Katzenbach	1996	Strat & Ldship	MddleMgr to Chnge Lder	1	2	1	1	1	6
Kinnie	2005	HRMgt Jnl	Satisf. w HR & commitment	2	2	2	2	2	10
Kinnie	2009	CP IntIndRelns	Commit to whom Multi foci	3	2	1	0	1	7
Klein	2012	AoM Rev	Reconceptualizing Wkpl Comm	3	1	3	0	1	8
Klein Molloy	2009	book sect	Construct definitions	3	1	3	1	1	9
Krishnaveni	2008	ICFAI J Org Beh	Revalidn OC scale	2	1	1	1	1	6
Kuvaas	2010	HRMgt Jnl	PercInvEmpDevt PSS & Outcomes	3	3	2	2	2	12
Kwon	2010	MgtIntRev	HCommHR Pract & Top Perf	2	2	2	2	2	10
Macey	2008	Ind & Org Psych	Meaning of Emp Eng	3	2	2	0	1	8
Mathieu	1990	Psych Bull	Meta anal anteced etc OC	3	1	2	2	1	9
McBain	2007	Strat HR Rev	The Practice of Engagement	1	2	1	0	0	4
McInnis	2009	Jnl Voc Beh	Psych contracts & OC	3	1	2	2	2	10
Meyer	1991	HR Mgt Rev	3 component OC	3	1	3	0	1	8
Meyer	1997	book	Commitment in workplace	3	2	3	2	1	11
Meyer	2002	Jnl Voc Beh	Meta anal anteced etc OC	3	1	2	3	1	10
Morrow	2011	Jnl Voc Beh	Managing OC longitudinal	3	2	1	2	1	9
Mowday	1982	book	OrgLinks psych of commitment	3	1	2	1	1	8
Mowday	1979	Jnl Voc Beh	Assessment of OC	3	1	1	2	1	8
Nielsen	2012	Jnl Mgt	OCB & Gp perf in res allocn	1	1	1	2	2	7
Nishii	2008	Personnel Psyc	Employee 'Why' of HR practices	2	1	2	2	2	9
Nohria	2008	Harvard Bus Rev	Emp Motivation new model	2	2	2	1	1	8
Nystrom	1990	Grp&Org Studies	VertXchange & OC	2	2	2	2	2	10
O'Reilly	1986	Jnl App Psych	OC & psych att prosocial beh	3	1	3	2	2	11
O'Reilly	1991	AoM Jnl	POFit Org Culture	3	1	2	2	2	10
Organ	1995	Personnel Psyc	Meta anal predict OCB	2	1	2	1	1	7
Oswick	2011	AoM Rev	Borrowing theory	1	2	3	2	2	10
Parkes	2007	Emp Relns	High commitment strategies	2	2	1	2	2	9
Parzefall	2012	Human Relations	Social capital emp perspective	2	1	1	2	1	7
Peccei	2011	Personnel Rev	Role OC & resist change	3	3	3	2	2	13
Purcell	2007	HRMgt Jnl	FLM as agents in HRM perf ch	2	3	3	2	2	12
Redman	2005	JnlMgtStudies	Multiple comm & behavior	1	1	2	2	1	7
Renwick	2003	Employee Relations	Line Mgr involvement in HRM	1	2	1	2	1	7
Rhoades	2001	Jnl App Psych	OC contrib of POS	3	1	2	2	2	10
Robinson	2007	IES Opinion	Emp Engagement	2	2	1	1	2	8
Rousseau	1989	Emp Resp Rts Jnl	Psych contracts	2	2	2	1	1	8
Sahoo	2010	EmpRelnsRecord	EmpEmpwt & IndComm	1	2	2	0	0	5
Savaneviciene	2010	Engineering Economics	Models HRM Org Perf	1	1	2	0	0	4
Seo	2012	Personnel Psyc	Affect & Ldship in Org change	1	2	1	2	1	7
Shamir	1991	Organization Studies	Meaning Self & Motivation	2	2	3	0	1	8
Shore	1995	AoM Jnl	Man Perc OC	3	3	2	2	2	12
Shore	2008	Jnl Org Beh	Mgt percept OC	3	3	2	2	2	12
Shore	2004	book sect	Employer-orient strat EOR	2	2	2	2	1	9
Simpson	2009	Int Jnl Nurs Stud	Engt. Literature review	2	1	2	0	2	7
Stoker	2006	Jnl Gen Mgt	Leading Mdl Mgt	1	3	2	2	1	9
Suddaby	2010	AoM Rev	Construct clarity	1	2	3	1	1	8
Suddaby	2011	AoM Rev	New Org Theory	1	2	3	1	1	8

Swailles	2002	Int Jnl Mgt Rev	OC a critique	3	1	3	0	1	8
Taylor	2008	Int Jnl HRMgt	OC & HRM in MNCs	3	1	2	1	2	9
Thompson	2005	Int Jnl HRMgt	Mngr diff org just & OC	3	3	2	2	1	11
Ugboro	2006	J Beh & AppMgt	OC job design empowerment	2	2	2	2	1	9
Weick	1999	Jnl Mgt Inquiry	That's moving - theories	1	2	3	2	2	10
Werther	1987	LdshOrgDevt Jnl	Loyalty: CrossOrg compar	2	2	1	1	1	7
Wilkinson	2011	HumRes Mgt	New Times for Emp Voice	2	2	2	0	1	7
Wiseman	2012	JnlMgtStudies	Towards Social Theory Agency	1	2	3	0	2	8
Wooldridge	2008	Jnl Mgt	Mddle Mgt perspect on strategy	1	2	2	1	1	7
Wreder	2007	Total Qual Mgt	Succ Mgt Meth ach cowlk hth	1	2	1	2	2	8

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C.P2 – York

P2 Middle Managers' role in engendering Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

Organizational Commitment is a much-researched construct and according to the literature holds a number of benefits for organizations – including lower turnover and a higher incidence of organizational citizenship behaviours, OCB's. An overlapping construct Employee Engagement was developed initially in practice and adopted more recently by some scholars.

Recent revisions of both constructs have not dealt with their confusion. More importantly, much less is known about the views of a key player in this employee organization relationship, namely the direct report's manager – the middle manager.

This paper reports on the design and execution of research into middle managers' views in one organization, 'Y', a very large international food and beverage producer. A sample of 24 middle managers drawn from 3 sites in Western Europe participated in a mix of one on one interviews, journals and paired depth interviews. The latter have been rarely used in management research, but are shown to yield rich data concerning the sense making of the participant middle managers.

The research questions concerned how middle managers describe and frame the phenomenon (of attachment of their direct reports to the organization), and what signs they look for, together with their views on whether and how such attachments can be influenced or managed.

The managers were found to use either the term attachment or engagement most often, and to look mainly for signs of their direct reports, 'going the extra mile', involvement, enthusiasm and energy. They also clearly believed that the phenomenon can be managed and that it is part of their roles to do so. They offered a number of techniques for influencing commitment e.g. task enlargement, coaching of performance, translating corporate messages.

They volunteered some organizational actions that work against achievement of higher levels of attachment/engagement, notably the intense and continuing focus on downsizing and cost cutting. The accompanying focus of both Y and the middle managers on the output measures appeared to downgrade the importance of attachment/engagement, despite Y's espousal of it. This leaves open the risk that continuing efforts to reduce costs will lead to lower levels of attachment/engagement and frustrate efforts dependent on worker support and co-operation. Suggestions for future research are made.

1. Introduction

This research report outlines the importance of the topic and the research questions (in section 1) and the current state of knowledge (in section 2). More details can be found in the earlier systematic literature review. Section 3 outlines the research design, while Section 4 describes the results of the fieldwork. The report concludes with a discussion of the findings in Section 5 and a conclusion in Section 6. To aid the reader many of the quotations from the empirical research are deferred to an appendix (Section 8).

1.1. Relevance of research

For several decades, many businesses based in developed economies have experienced significant pressures causing them to restructure, downsize and otherwise raise productivity and reduce costs (Cascio 1993). Such trends have often had an adverse impact on the levels of organizational commitment, OC, among many (but not all) employees e.g. (Grunberg et al., 2008). As well as being detrimental to the employees, this is not viewed as beneficial for the organization. Higher levels of OC have been associated with lower turnover rates, better performance and higher incidence of citizenship behaviours (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Meyer, et al., 2002)

However, the mechanisms of these associations, and the issue of how best to maintain or restore levels of OC are not yet resolved. It would be of benefit to both management practice and academia if more light could be shed on the underlying processes. In particular managers seeking to successfully implement major changes in their organizations would benefit from better understanding how OC could be ‘managed’, assuming for the moment that that is even possible. Authors such as Hales (2001) and Balogun (2003) have made the case that far from disappearing or being an obstacle to progress, middle managers can be seen as significant contributors to the successful implementation of necessary changes in organizations. Other studies have observed the manager’s importance to commitment e.g. “*An employee’s satisfaction with his or her supervisor can be an important factor associated with that person’s commitment to the organization.*” (Jernigan & Beggs 2005, p.2186) This makes the middle manager a desirable focus of any study of how OC is influenced. In this paper the term middle manager is used to refer to those managers/supervisors with direct line management responsibility for subordinates, but who are not at a sufficiently senior level to have responsibility for, or significant influence on, setting the strategy of the organization or other key directional aspects e.g. vision/mission, corporate HR policies etc.

An important reason for the focus of this research on the middle manager, apart from their omission in much of the OC literature, is that these managers are thought to play a significant and direct role in influencing employee attitudes and thus their behaviours. Writers on human resource management draw the distinction between “*espoused and enacted HR practices*” e.g. (Purcell & Hutchinson 2007, p.5). As just one example, the authors report that over 40% of their large employee sample were not satisfied with the performance appraisal system, complaining of issues such as frequency that are directly related to their direct manager. How such managers view OC and how they may seek to influence levels within their own direct reports is likely to have a significant impact on OC.

The limited amount of OC literature dealing with the middle manager also led to use of a grounded approach in the research design, with only two basic theories assumed at the outset (see Section 3). It will be shown that, at least in this empirical study, middle managers views are

consistent with the theories and support the notion that they seek to manage OC levels in their direct reports.

1.2. Development of research questions

However OC is defined (see p. 3 – 4), the construct refers to the attachment that an employee feels towards his/her employing organization. This relationship will strengthen or weaken according to the employee's perceptions of the organization. What little is known about middle managers and OC, suggests that such perceptions of the organization can be influenced by middle managers' behaviours e.g. *"employees attribute favorable treatment by the supervisor to the organization and, as a result, feel obligated to the organization"* (Eisenberger et al. 2010, p.3). This leads naturally to a series of research questions concerning middle manager's understanding of OC. It is assumed that their sense making of the concept will not only affect their own behavior, but also impact their direct reports in some way.

5. What, if anything, do middle managers understand by organizational commitment, and how do they describe it?
6. Whatever their vocabulary, what signs do they look for to assess the level of connection between their direct reports and the organization?
7. How do middle managers view OC as being influenced?
8. Do middle managers believe they can influence OC, and if so how?

2. What do we already know

2.1. Definition of commitment

Hirsch & Levin (1999) observed that umbrella constructs (defined as “a broad concept or idea used loosely to encompass and account for a set of diverse phenomena”, Ibid p. 200) typically pass through four stages in a process or life cycle. The last stage can lead to various outcomes ranging from making the “construct coherent” i.e. broad acceptance, or to “construct collapse” i.e. non-acceptance in the scholarly community [Ibid p. 205]. It will be seen that organizational commitment fits well their model of an umbrella construct, in that OC combines a number of different aspects of the attachment that an individual can experience towards the organization of which he/she is a member.

In its early days OC definitions included “*making a side bet [that] links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity*” Becker (1960, p.32), “*a partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of an organization, to one’s role in relation to goals and values, and to the organization for its own sake*” Buchanan II (1974, p.533), “*a mindset in which individuals consider the extent to which their own values and goals are congruent with those of the organization ... [and] to the process by which individuals become locked into a certain organization ...*” (Mowday et al. 1982, p.26). Hirsch & Levin (1999, p.203) also observed that umbrella concepts went through a stage they termed “*Tidying up with typologies*”. One such attempt that gained wide support, but not consensus, in the OC area was the Meyer & Allen (1991, p.67) three component model. This distinguished between “*the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization ... an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization ... [and] a feeling of obligation to continue employment*” while retaining the overall label organizational commitment.

Most recently, an attempt at reconceptualizing the OC construct has sought to limit the use of the term commitment to a particular type of bond (one of four types) between the individual and the target of the ‘attachment’ – in this case the organization. In this view commitment should be characterised as “*volitional*” and experienced as a positive “*embrace*ment”, but not as a full “*merging of oneself with the target*” (Klein et al, 2012, p. 135). The latter is reserved for their ‘identification’ type of bond. The authors also propose that each of the four different types of bond “*reflects a distinct psychological phenomena that arise from differing circumstances*” [Ibid. p 133]. In one sense this reconceptualization helps to reduce the number of phenomena in the umbrella concept. However, in deliberately formulating their bonds as target neutral, the authors substitute other diverse phenomena i.e. commitment can be directed to multiple targets. It is also unclear to what extent the authors’ model presumes an employee experiencing different types of bond simultaneously although they do suggest, “*it is possible to experience a bond as a mix of adjoining types*” [Ibid p. 135].

Another difficulty with the reconceptualization is its novelty, which will both restrict comparisons with some of the previous work that employed older and different definitions, and also limit its use until an accepted operationalization is achieved. It also looks unlikely to readily settle the lack of consensus on a definition of OC.

Despite these problems with the Klein et al formulation of OC it is intended to adopt their approach, in part because some of the existing empirical research appears to support it e.g. Corace (2007) showed within a single organization a small minority reporting very high levels of attachment at one end of the spectrum, an equal or even smaller minority at the other end, and a large majority in the moderate to high segment. The reconceptualization also resolves the difficulty of having both positive and negative aspects of attachment within the same construct, a particular source of criticism by other scholars.

Another general difficulty (shared with other definitions of OC) is that some scholars have developed a related construct of employee engagement. This should not be confused with the separate construct of work engagement, which has more overlap with job satisfaction. Employee engagement appears to have come into general use first in the area of practice and, anecdotally at least, managers appear more familiar with the term engagement than with the term commitment. (This anticipates the decision to build the early interviews in this research design around ‘attachment’ by employees to their organization, avoiding wherever possible any use of either engagement or commitment). In their work on disentangling the meaning of engagement Macey & Schneider (2008) used the term ‘state engagement’ to include commitment (alongside other feelings such as involvement and satisfaction). It is by no means clear whether such engagement and OC are distinct and separate constructs, overlapping or even identical. The table below highlights the main features of the two constructs as defined by the two recent articles.

Broad Concept	Commitment	Engagement
Label of ‘Umbrella’ Construct	Organizational Commitment	Employee Engagement
Source of “ <i>Tidying up with Typologies</i> ” (Hirsch & Levin 1999)	(Klein et al. 2012)	(Macey & Schneider 2008)
Relationship type	Psychological state. Commitment = One of four types of bond	Psychological state. State engagement = One of three elements of engagement
Target	One or more of many within the employee-organization relationship	One or more of many within the employee-organization relationship
‘Family’ phenomenon	Attachment	Attachment
Other characteristics	Omits negative aspect e.g. what was previously termed continuance commitment is now treated as separate ‘Instrumental’ or ‘Acquiescence’ bonds	Omits negative aspect e.g. excludes disengagement or detachment

Table 1. Similarities between OC and Employee Engagement

Klein et al view engagement as an outcome of their commitment bond [Ibid. p 143]. Macey & Schneider view OC as an important facet of state engagement [Ibid. p 8]. For the purpose of this enquiry it is not necessary to take a view on the degree of overlap or distinctiveness of the two constructs. However, it is important to recognize the high potential for confusion between the two, especially amongst practising managers. It is also much more likely that managers will have encountered the term engagement (favoured and promoted by the consultant community) and will have much less awareness of the term commitment.

Underlying this confusion over not only the content of the construct, but also its ‘label’, is a differing view concerning what some describe as an employee organization relationship. OC

views the relationship from the viewpoint of the organization, while employee engagement views it from the viewpoint of the employee.

This in turn means that care will be necessary in researching how managers make sense of the phenomenon (e.g. by avoiding use of either term) and also in interpreting the data. Therefore this research will, in part, be used to observe what term(s) middle managers make use of in addressing such attachments to the organization. What follows uses OC as its starting point, but it will be seen that much of the findings can (and should) be regarded as relevant to the field of employee engagement.

2.2. Antecedents of commitment

The Klein et al reconceptualization also proposes a classification of antecedents of commitment, and previous research is summarised below, using the three of their five headings that are most relevant to this research – individual characteristics, interpersonal factors and organisational factors.

2.2.1. Individual characteristics

From the outset researchers have looked for evidence that personal characteristics might be associated with particular levels of commitment. Most concluded that there is only weak or inconsistent correlation with demographic factors such as age and gender (Mathieu & Zajac 1990; Meyer et al. 2002)

Dispositional characteristics have fared better. A few studies have examined the relationship between commitment and the Big Five personality characteristics. For example, Erdheim et al. (2006) predicted correctly a significant relationship between Extraversion and commitment.

2.2.2. Interpersonal factors

Little of the research dealing with the relationship between the individual and the ‘leader’ has focused on the direct report and the middle manager. However, the direct report’s level of commitment has been shown to be associated with their perceived satisfaction with their supervisor/manager (Jernigan & Beggs 2005). Likewise the construct of leader member exchange, LMX, relating to the strength of relationship between manager and subordinate (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995) has been associated with commitment. Nystrom examined a sample of middle managers and their managers, finding a positive correlation between OC and vertical exchange (his term for the construct now more frequently described as LMX). This study is relevant not only because of its use of middle managers in the sample experiencing the commitment, but also because it carefully controlled for situational variables (e.g. length of experience, organization size, level of hierarchy – all found to be insignificant) and considered the different situation of middle managers (“... *middle or upper managers have accumulated many experiences with a variety of bosses and jobs. Therefore one would not expect most managers to equate a current boss with their overall organization non reflectively.*” (Nystrom, 1990, p. 304) Subsequent studies on LMX and commitment demonstrated different levels of correlation, suggesting the possibility of some mediating factor. A recent study proposed and then observed a new construct, supervisor organizational embodiment, SOE. This comprises the extent to which employees identify their managers with the organization (Eisenberger et al. 2010). Their discussion explicitly considers the duality of the middle manager being (and acting) as an agent of the organization and being (and acting) as an individual. This issue is developed further in the theoretical section (p. 8).

The psychological contract describes the belief of an individual that, over and above their employment contract, there is some sort of additional and voluntary exchange contract or agreement with the organization (Rousseau 1989). One study determined that commitment levels were higher when the psychological contract was viewed as broad, trust-based, and long term (McInnis et al., 2009). Another showed that in cases involving a perceived breach of the psychological contract, middle manager behaviour (specifically in maintaining a 'fair' environment and fostering high perceived levels of organizational justice) mitigates the negative impact on commitment (Thompson & Heron 2005). Work showing that perceived employee voice was also associated with commitment extended these findings. Furthermore, the latter relationship was partially mediated by the relationship with the manager (Farndale et al., 2011).

Another similar framework relies on the construct of perceived organizational support, POS, defined as the organization's commitment to the employee as perceived by the latter (Eisenberger, et al., 1986). Unlike the psychological contract, POS focuses on just that part of the relationship where the employer/organization provides 'support' over and above the employment contract. POS was shown to be associated with higher commitment (and job performance), an association hypothesised to result from an obligation to reciprocate the organization's care (Eisenberger, et al., 2001). A third study Rhoades et al. (2001) included a longitudinal element and concluded that POS was causing the improved commitment observed.

2.2.3. Organisational factors

To suggest that OC is influenced by organizational culture, or by other organizational factors, is a tautology. Yet this area is fertile territory for research on OC, albeit little of this has been used to study the middle manager. Studies of the organization's vision/mission, Taylor et al. (2008), of organizational values O'Reilly et al. (1991) Finegan (2000), and of organizational change Grunberg et al. (2008) have mostly focused on senior management. One exception examined a particular case of organizational change over a three year period (Huy 2002). The study concluded that middle managers both managed their own emotions relating to the change and also were sensitive to, and sought to influence, the emotional state of their direct reports. It is the latter part of the 'emotional balancing' that throws light on what middle managers may do to influence commitment, albeit care clearly needs to be exercised in distinguishing between commitment to the organization and commitment to the change project itself.

OC has also been examined as a precursor and potential influence on receptiveness or resistance to change (Peccei et al., 2011). This Italian study showed that higher prior OC was associated with a lower level of resistance to change. A longitudinal study of change in a privatised utility supports the conclusion that middle managers perform as 'change intermediaries' and help others, including their direct reports, through the change process (Balogun 2003). Other studies show the effect of HR management policies and practices on OC (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Gilbert et al., 2011; Nishii et al., 2008), with the last of these highlighting the contribution of the middle manager in the enactment of HR policies.

In summary employees appear to have different levels of commitment or attachment to their organization, and their direct manager, at least in part, affects these levels. And yet little is known about how the direct manager views the phenomenon. The research reported here seeks to throw light on their understanding.

3. The Research Design

Section 1 described the importance of OC to both academia and to practice, and argued for a focus on the (neglected) role of the middle manager. Hence the research questions (section 1.2) essentially seek to explore middle managers' understanding of the phenomenon. The research design outlined in the following pages, while informed by the existing OC literature, specifically avoids assuming that practicing managers have any awareness of the philosophical and theoretical basis employed in academic articles. Thus one consideration in the design is to avoid as far as possible supplying the respondents with any framework for discussing commitment (including the use of the term itself). This is to 'avoid leading the witness'. The research is designed to explore and observe middle management perceptions and understanding of the phenomenon.

Discussion of the connection between current academic thinking and the proposed design is included below to frame the methodology.

3.1. Philosophical stance

Klein et al. view commitment as a bond, *"This perceived bond is a socially constructed psychological state, differentiated from other bonds in that the individual does not psychologically merge with the target but does make a conscious choice to care about and dedicate him/herself to the target. More concisely, commitment is defined here as a volitional psychological bond reflecting dedication to and responsibility for a particular target."* [Ibid, p 137]

Such a psychological state is internal to the individual, not readily observable, and may be conscious, unconscious, or a mixture of the two. The definition further assumes that the relationship that an individual forms with the organization is based on his/her evaluation or judgement about the organization (including what constitutes the 'organization'), and that this judgement will rest in part on the individual's on-going perceptions. It will also likely be influenced by the behaviour and views of both the individual's reporting manager and also the immediate work colleagues.

This emphasises both the social construction of the phenomenon and the interactions between several players that will affect their specific points of view. This means that there is no specific, let alone single, reality that can be observed by the individual experiencing the commitment (let alone the onlooker). When an employee states (or scores) 'this is a good place to work', this does not equate with a simple tick of a single box; commitment is a more complex state. All of which argues for adopting an idealist ontology and constructionist epistemology (Blaikie 2007).

While this stance challenges the more positivist ones adopted in many previous studies, it is more appropriate to a construct that is essentially created by the participants (the individual, an anthropomorphized organization, and probably both the co-workers and manager). It also supports research (and the proposed Research Questions) that seeks to establish how middle managers make sense of the phenomenon, since their viewpoint will not only affect their own preparedness to attempt to influence their direct reports' levels of OC but also the direct reports' perception of the relationship with the organization.

3.2.Theoretical background

The central plank of most commitment articles is social exchange theory (Blau 1964). This is a theory imported from sociology that proposes that people form bonds based on reciprocal acts or 'exchanges' that provide mutual benefit. As originally proposed it did not relate to the context of OC. *"The purpose of the intensive analysis of interpersonal relations is not ... nor is it to search for the psychological roots of human direction, but it is to derive from this analysis a better understanding of the complex structures of association among men that develop."* [Ibid p 2] Also Blau clearly distinguished social exchange from economic exchange by the former's unspecified obligations and the requirement of trust between the participants. Thus application of social exchange theory to commitment requires an acceptance of both unspecified obligations on the individual (from the organization), and mutual trust. Both assertions lead inexorably to a further assumption of anthropomorphism.

Despite not relating to the context of OC, social exchange theory together with its partner principle, the norm of reciprocity Gouldner (1960), has been used to explain both it and its antecedents and associated constructs e.g. perceived organizational support, POS Eisenberger et al. (2002), high commitment performance management, HCPM Farndale et al. (2011) and the psychological contract (Rousseau 1989). In these and other articles, the employee is portrayed as perceiving benefits provided by the organization e.g. opportunities for training and development and, as a result offering commitment e.g. in the form of discretionary effort and citizenship behaviours. Although this research focuses on the middle manager rather than the employee, it will be of interest to observe whether or not the manager's behaviours are consistent with social exchange theory and this model.

Coyle-Shapiro & Shore (2007) explored anthropomorphism in their more general review of employee organization relationships and suggested that such personification requires an employee to attribute some of the behaviours of representatives of the organization as being carried out on behalf of the organization. Such attribution leads naturally to another theory relevant to OC, namely agency theory. This is a theory imported from economics, and originally focused on the notion that an agent's self-interest could lead to opportunistic behaviours (of e.g. CEO's) not necessarily in the interests of the principals e.g. owners (Eisenhardt 1989). This neo-classical view has been broadened more recently to encompass situations where the agents and the principals may not necessarily have greatly differing goals, but differ rather in the information they have (Wiseman et al., 2012) This, more social, view of agency theory fits the context of a senior management group willing the 'end' of selected strategy, mission, vision and values, while necessarily relying for execution and 'means' on the agency of the middle managers that have the more direct relationship with the wider workforce. Thus agency theory proposes that the asymmetry of information may lead to behaviours by the agents that are not those desired by the principals. For example, one study of middle managers implementing an approved change programme noted, *"Middle managers encouraged employees to express a wider range of emotions, both personal and work related, than had been traditionally allowed. These actions violated ... explicit personnel procedures, which strongly discouraged managers from getting involved in employees' individual concerns"* (Huy 2002, p.49) This research is designed to examine explicitly how middle managers view OC being influenced e.g. by their own actions or by those of the organization, or a mixture. This may provide an indication of how middle managers perceive their own role e.g. as an agent of the organization or not, and at a

minimum indicate where if at all there is a dichotomy between information available locally to the manager, and that more generally available throughout the organization.

A third part of the theoretical framework for OC is sensemaking (Weick 1995). Both the philosophical stance adopted and the representation of commitment as a phenomenon that is constructed by the participants requires consideration of ‘meaning’. That is both the meaning that an individual e.g. a middle manager or one of his/her direct reports may place on a word, or behaviour, and also the meaning or schema that may be associated with some group of people e.g. a team or a department. In this research the focus is on the middle manager’s view of commitment and thus the meanings of both words and behaviours they observe are important in discovering how they deal with the phenomenon. This in turn leads to the selection of primarily qualitative techniques in the research design. While the majority of existing empirical research has used quantitative techniques, this research aims to improve understanding of the construct itself and observe any evidence for the theories advanced so far to explain it. For example, do middle managers (consciously or unconsciously) appear to relate to their direct reports on an exchange basis with provision of training and coaching viewed as deserving of enhanced efforts from their direct reports, or do middle managers indicate behaviours differing from those desired by policy or senior management, on grounds of ‘better’ or deeper understanding of the context or their direct reports’ needs?

3.3. Methodology and data collection

Given the phenomenon is constructed by the ‘actors’ and the main focus of the research questions is on the middle manager, rather than on the individual direct reports experiencing the commitment, it is appropriate to focus on the middle manager level of enquiry. Also, to minimize the impact of organizational factors, the research was confined to a single corporate organization, where aspects of culture could be expected to remain broadly similar (although not identical) in different locations. Overall the project assumed as little as possible regarding the phenomenon including any vocabulary or labels used to discuss it.

Within this overall ‘grounded approach’, two broad techniques were considered but rejected, direct observation and repertory grid. The former was rejected in part because the practical problems associated with observing middle managers are formidable, and the material gathered does not allow for probing for better understanding as the observations occur e.g. seeking immediate feedback on what caused them to respond to a direct report in a particular way. Repertory grid was also rejected, because this technique requires prior and specific definition of the constructs under review and seems better suited to phenomena where individual perceptions of a few distinct constructs is assumed. With OC there is potentially as much interest in the individual’s perception of some group level ‘schema’ as the individual’s own cognitive viewpoint, and the construct itself is anything but simple. Kehoe & Wright (2013) discuss this issue in relation to those exhibiting the commitment.

Accordingly techniques comprising interviews and analysis of transcripts of their recordings were selected. The interviews allowed scheduling at times convenient to the participants and allowed for contemporaneous probing of responses by the researcher. Interviews could also be carried out with little, and only neutral, reference to the phenomenon being explored, supporting the key objective of exploring participants’ schema.

The first two research questions deal with individual perceptions regarding the phenomenon:

1. What, if anything, do middle managers understand by organizational commitment, and how do they describe it?
2. Whatever their vocabulary, what signs do they look for to assess the level of connection between their direct reports and the organization?

One-to-one semi-structured interviews were selected for this aspect of the research, because it was of crucial importance to discover the individual level views of different middle managers and protect any variations and differences of opinion that might be evident. It was therefore appropriate to avoid group interviews and to ensure as far as practical that the interviewer avoided any indications of his thinking or conceptualization of the phenomenon.

Another potential problem that was anticipated was that respondents might find the open ended questioning disconcerting, and have difficulty in recalling examples of their experience of the phenomenon. Therefore, in addition to the one-on-one interviews, respondents were offered a small notebook to take away at the end of the interview. They were asked to note any observations regarding their direct reports' attachment to the organization, over the subsequent eight weeks. In addition to arranging for collection of these notes respondents were all invited to return for a further interview stage.

Subsequent interviews were designed to deal with the remaining two research questions:

3. How do middle managers view OC as being influenced?
4. Do middle managers believe they can influence OC, and if so how?

Since the first round interviews were designed to establish the individual vocabulary employed and signs that were looked for, there was no need to keep respondents separate. Group interviews were considered likely to be more productive, particularly to explore any shared views of what the role of the middle manager was, and techniques that might be commonly used to influence commitment. In order to both maximise respondent contributions and also minimise interviewer/moderator interventions, paired interviews were used for this final stage.

Paired depth interviews have been employed in both sociology and in healthcare/medical research, and in practice by commercial market researchers. Where the participants have a shared knowledge of potentially sensitive subjects, the technique can have some merits over more conventional focus groups, by encouraging more equal contributions and an earlier confidence in discussing the issues raised.

The particular benefits being sought in this research project (that have been described by advocates) are that participants *"can corroborate or supplement each other's stories. They can probe, correct, challenge, or introduce fresh themes for discussion that can result in further disclosure and richer data."* Taylor & de Vocht (2011, p.1577) and that, *"the dyad approach draws upon the [...] attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions that are more likely to emerge together than in an individual context. From an interpretive research perspective, a dyad enables the observer to gain more information about the social construction of [...] reality..."* Ungar et al. (2006, p.2355). Specifically this research design refers to the use of paired interviews after earlier individual interviews, for a short summary see (Arksey 1996). One (rare) example of this technique in management research highlights the triangulation benefit of using

both individual and dyad data and that the pair interviews “*facilitate the discussion of more latent issues*” (Zaidman & Drory 2001, p.679).

Overall, its use with middle managers was anticipated to yield richer data in two respects. First, the presence of a fellow colleague helps to keep the conversation more open and ‘honest’. It also provides an opportunity for one manager to build on another’s intervention or otherwise ‘spark off’ the other’s contribution.

The different stages of the design are summarised in the table below. Each stage is described in more detail in the text that follows.

Stage and timing	Research activity	Content and context
Stage 1 – week 1	One-to-one interviews with approximately 20 middle managers. Duration around 45-50 minutes. Recorded and subsequently transcribed.	On site at place of work in neutral ‘meeting room’. Focus on first two research questions (understanding of commitment and signs of it that the manager looks for). At conclusion participation in future stages invited and briefing offered for journals.
Stage 2 – weeks 2 through 8	Individual observation of items of interest in their direct reports relating to attachment. Any notes made in notebooks supplied were sent (e mail) to researcher at two-week intervals, following reminders.	Primed by the interview it was anticipated that participants would note examples of differing levels of commitment and be able to use these examples as a basis for the subsequent stage.
Stage 3 – week 9	Re-interview of participants in pairs. Duration around 60-70 minutes for pairs and 45 minutes for individuals. (Individual interviews were only used where pairs were unavailable)	On site at place of work in neutral ‘meeting room’. Focus on final two research questions (potential for managing commitment and techniques used). Where pairs could not be scheduled and where possible, individual one-to-one interviews were used.

Table 2. Summary of the research design used

This sequence of individual one-to-one interviews, notebook completion and paired depth interviews allowed local language and individual manager views to be established first, then provided each manager with an opportunity for reflection and additional observation, leading up to discussion of what the role of the middle manager and their tools and techniques might comprise.

The organization used in the study was ‘Y’, a very large international member of the food and beverage sector. The research was conducted at three separate sites, responsible for the production and distribution of a number of Y’s well-known brands, situated in Western Europe, and each of which employed 200-300 staff and formed part of the supply side of the business. In each case a member of the site HR team was asked to provide a small sample of middle managers from different functional backgrounds and with a range of age and length of service with the organization to participate. Sample selection was geared to access as wide a range of views as possible.

The resulting sample were involved in various aspects of operations and the associated functions e.g. quality control, logistics. A mix of length of service, experience and function was obtained comprising a total of 25 invitees. One, who was unavoidably absent for the first interview, was dropped from the sample. To provide an indication of their backgrounds and a ‘flavour’ of the participants, the characteristics of the sample of 24 are shown in Table 3, together with an indication of both the age and length of service distributions.

Location	Greenvill e	Bluetow n	Redford
Male	7	4	9
Female	2	2	0
Participants	9	6	9
Ave. age	45-55	35-45	35-45
Ave. service	21	13	13

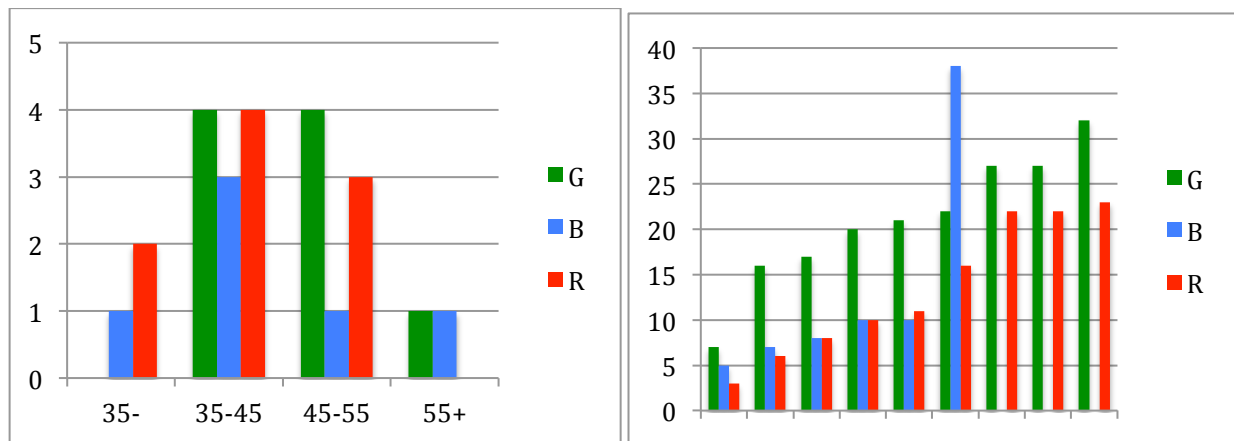


Table 3. Characteristics of participants

The one to one interview guide was piloted before use with a separate group of middle managers from other organizations. This together with discussions with Y’s HR department led to a number of amendments. The final protocol used in Stage 1 is shown in Appendix 1. The chief modifications made to the pilot were as follows:

- The purpose of the interview emphasised that the prime interest was in the middle manager’s views of his/her direct reports’ attachment i.e. not the middle manager’s own attachment to the organization
- In exploring the middle manager’s view of ‘attachment’, the question on terminology was omitted. This was a response to both the pilot experience and to the organization making extensive use of the term ‘engagement’ e.g. claiming to measure it, and judge reporting managers on the basis of scores in the annual employee surveys, and the use of the term in manager training.
- Part of the phrasing inserted in the front of the journals/notebooks [see below] was used to prompt responses by interviewees
- The questions on measurement by the organization were modified, and instead views on the annual employee survey were explored. Where necessary, the section was omitted and included in the subsequent interviews.

Stage 2 was briefed to interviewees at the conclusion of their interview. Participants were requested to make notes about any aspect of attachment that raised their interest. All agreed to participate and were given a small A5 spiral notebook with a short statement entered into the inside front cover. This read;

“Members of organizations, that is the managers and employees, whether full or part-time, are often observed to form an “attachment” to their organizations. These attachments appear to vary both over time and as between individuals in the same organization. Some of the factors affecting these attachments have been identified, for example the organization’s values and its culture. However, a lot is still not understood. This study, in one organization, is designed to help better understanding, and in particular explore the views of middle managers. Please identify any notes with the date written and the reference:”

Subsequently, each participant received a fortnightly e mail seeking copies of any notes made to date and encouraging further observations.

Stage 3 interviews were arranged approximately 8 weeks after the first interview and the prime focus was on the last two research questions, how OC is influenced and how middle managers might influence OC in their direct reports. Wherever practical these interviews were arranged in pairs; only where diaries intervened or participants failed to appear were one-to-one interviews substituted.

At the outset of the Stage 3 interviews, participants were asked to recall one example of attachment from their experience during the last 8 weeks (whether or not from their notebook observations). This was used as the jumping off point for a discussion of their views on the research topics. Even though some of the Stage 1 interviews had involved discussion of Y’s annual employee surveys, the topic was revisited to ascertain views on the usefulness and usability of the results by the middle managers.

In the event a total of seven paired interviews were arranged totalling 14 participants and a further seven took part in one-on-one interviews. Only three participants were unavailable for re-interview, because of absence or job pressures. This situation permitted a comparison of the pair and single interviews and reinforced the anticipated benefits of the former.

Activity	Greenvill e	Bluetow n	Redford
One-to-one interviews (St. 1)	9	6	9
Paired interviews (St. 3)	3	3	1
One-to-one interviews (St. 3)	2	0	5
Absent from St. 3	1	0	2

Table 4. Interviews obtained

3.4. Analysis framework

As the design was qualitative and consciously chosen to explore how middle managers viewed OC, no initial hypotheses were considered. All interviews were transcribed and then listened to in depth and repeatedly, to ensure original speech and thoughts were captured. After corrections, the transcripts were loaded into NVivo. The Stage 1 interviews were explored for the vocabulary

used to describe ‘attachment’. After re-reading each clean transcript in full, the interviews were marked for preliminary coding and then words assigned to nodes representing key ‘labels’. Next, the transcripts were reread to identify the specific signs that participants used to identify the presence or absence of attachment in their direct reports. A sample of such coding is shown at the beginning of Appendix 2. Later the journal outputs were checked for any additional data. A similar process was adopted for the Stage 3 interviews. This time the analysis focused on the ways in which the participants felt that attachment could be influenced.

4. Fieldwork and results

4.1. Stage 1 – Manager one-on-one interviews

In total sixteen different terms were used by participants to describe the phenomenon of attachment to the organization. These are listed alphabetically below with three negative ‘labels’ shown in brackets with their associated positives.

Affiliation	Appreciation	Engagement (or Disengagement)	Pride
Affinity	Attachment (or Detachment)	Identity	
Aligned	Commitment	Involvement	
Anchorage	Connection (or Disconnection)	Loyalty	

However, only half of these received significant usage. These are highlighted in yellow. Significance was deemed to be receiving a total of 10 or more mentions overall, irrespective of the number of users of the term. The remaining labels received 5 or less mentions. Also the vast majority of mentions were covered by just two terms Engagement (~40%) and Attachment (~33%). Since the interviewer commenced with the use of the term ‘attachment’ it is possible that the frequency of this term’s usage was artificially encouraged. However, this does not appear to be the case when the contexts of the mentions by participants are considered. One illustration of this is the frequency of mention of the two terms by each participant.

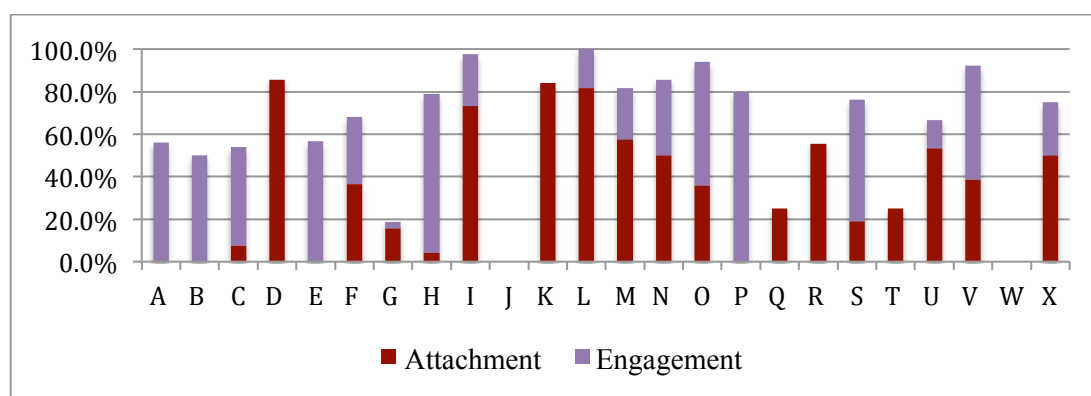


Table 5. Respondents' use of the 'attachment' and 'engagement' labels

If ‘attachment’ was being artificially encouraged by its initial use by the interviewer, one might expect all participants to use the term at least once – however, a quarter failed to do so. In addition only half used attachment for more than half their references.

Another point of significance arising from Table 5 is the (relatively) low usage of the term engagement, given that middle managers in Y are expressly advised that the company views engagement as a key performance indicator (KPI). It is measured annually in the employee survey, the results are fed back to the middle managers and senior management discuss the survey. Middle managers also receive training in how to observe and deal with engagement matters. Given this organizational focus on ‘engagement’, it is curious that the term does not feature even more strongly in the interviews.

In addition to their terms for the phenomenon, respondents discussed attachment/engagement in terms of what they observed as an outcome e.g. employees going the extra mile. Defining a construct in terms of its perceived outcome or conflating the two is not unusual. Indeed such confusion has been critiqued in academic contributions on commitment (Klein et al. 2009). All such ‘outcome’ responses were grouped together with respondents’ specific responses to the question of what signs they looked for. As with their choice of ‘labels’, the signs were grouped and coded using NVivo. This time, and after several reviews and merging of some categories, eleven distinct signs of attachment/engagement were identified. Sample quotes are shown in the table, more extensive quotes are provided in Appendix 2.

Sign of Attachment	Sample quotes from participants
Ambassador	<i>“... they would always talk up the company outside”</i> DG
Bigger Picture	<i>“... people who see the bigger picture I suppose, they are in it for more than the job”</i> DH
Development	<i>“... a sense of wanting to better yourself, a sense of learning new stuff ...”</i> DV
Energy	<i>“... it’s about that visible energy and aliveness ...”</i> RK
Enthusiasm	<i>“... you just see the level of enthusiasm, willingness to take things on, to put forward where others wouldn’t”</i> RP
Extra Mile	<i>“... trying to go the extra mile, as opposed to just seeing that’s what I do, that’s my remit”</i> DU
Involvement	<i>“... the curiosity and the inquisitiveness displayed to learn more about the project”</i> RK
Support others	<i>“... it’s thinking about others not just themselves”</i> DH
Time related	<i>“... who would show up for work on time, day in and day out”</i> RL
Trust	[of disengagement] <i>“... big element of trust, huge distrust”</i> DR
Turnover	<i>“... have that attachment because they wouldn’t then seek to go anywhere else”</i> RP

Table 6. Signs of attachment observed by middle managers

Typically to qualify as one of the signs indicating high attachment, at least three or four different managers needed to mention it in one way or another. If just one manager referred to it, then it was not included e.g. one offered “it’s how they present, how they tell a story”. Being unsupported by other managers, it was not included.

The preferred labels and the signs of attachment/engagement that these middle managers look for help uncover their perceptions of the phenomenon. It is worth noting here the relatively few mentions of what are termed organizational citizenship behaviours, OCB’s e.g. voluntarily assisting co-workers, and conscientious adherence to procedures, as opposed to the frequent mention of in role KPI-type activity.

Because of the semi-structured nature of these interviews, individual participants also raised several other issues. Four are reported here:

a) Middle manager measurement

Five respondents volunteered that they used a two by two matrix (dimensions being Skill, or competence at task roles, and Will, or appetite/drive to carry out task roles and more) to sort or classify their direct reports. This is based on the much criticised Situational Leadership model of Hersey and Blanchard, cited in (Nicholls 1985). The respondents’ approach was strictly qualitative and subjective e.g. *“I see people who are highly skilled and could add so much more but the will just isn’t just there to do it”*, and appeared dependent on the specific signs that the individual manager looked for, and his/her interpretation of behaviours. The only quantitative measures mentioned referred to the output and achievement by individual workers of their KPI’s. An example from Health and Safety was individual targets for the annual submission of formal

safety incident reports (of both positive and negative content). This was one early sign of middle managers' strong focus on KPIs.

b) Organizational measurement

Respondents also referred to Y's practice of collecting an annual employee survey. For the twin reasons that time did not permit discussion of this in all Stage 1 interviews, and that those that did referred to a number of both positive and negative views, this topic was noted for re-examination in Stage 3 (and is reported on more fully in that section).

c) Types of commitment

Several respondents indicated some form of classification or sub-division in their perceptions of 'attachment' or 'engagement' (respondents' terminology). There were two 'frameworks'. One concerned the drive or motivation behind the individual's commitment, irrespective of its strength. For example, more than half of the managers distinguished between commitments based on 'need' (e.g. for pay, for a job, for continued employment in the geographical location, for retirement benefits) and those based on 'desire' (wanting to develop oneself, wanting to contribute to the team, wanting to assist the success of the organization).

"... if you've got massive degree of overlap between your values and the values of the organization, you are very well placed to be very, very well engaged... If however you occupy a place of being somewhat distant from it and reject it, then the attachment is a dependency attachment. It's coming from the area of "I need your organization it is my income and nothing more." DBF

This mirrors the traditional Meyer and Allen distinction between 'continuance' and 'affective' commitment. However, it should be noted that other respondents saw only the 'desire' based commitment as proper attachment, viewing the 'need' based commitment as the reverse i.e. detachment or disengagement. All agreed that what they and the organization sought was the positive version.

The second type of framework, mentioned by nearly all respondents, gave clues as to their beliefs regarding how commitment developed and in particular the roles of personality and of earlier schooling/learning in fostering a work ethic and the duty/obligation to engage in a dedicated way at work e.g.

"you are a product of your upbringing... my father worked for X. He probably had about 25 years without a day off work" RL

However, individual views varied widely and some respondents voiced differing views at different times e.g. human nature versus the effect of the organization's culture. Opinions differed also as to whether such dispositions to be committed could be changed.

"I genuinely believe that within everyone, there is a potential to come in and have that strong connection and come in and do a really good job... I believe that's within everyone" RM

"... but actually for other people work is a means to an end, and their real passions and what drives them actually does start after five o'clock in the evening" DB

"People actually generally want to do the right thing, people want to work hard they want to take responsibility, they want to take ownership" D¹H

"But I always am of the view that everyone, given enough time and attention can change" DF

d) Performance management

Most of the respondents made mention of the formal performance management process used in Y and its interaction with both the assessment of the level of attachment/engagement in their direct reports (using the Will/Skill matrix mentioned in paragraph a) above), and the informal discussions that they held with individuals to understand the source of their attachment levels. This will also be further explored in the results of Stage 3.

4.2.Stage 2 – Manager journals

Although each of the 24 participants was provided with a notebook, only eight returned notes during the observation period. A further five made them available at the Stage 3 interviews. This was a comparatively poor response rate e.g. a study involving a similar number of managers but spread over 12 months elicited an average of 10 pages from each diarist (Balogun & Johnson 2004). While this may have been the result of a more focused topic (a specific restructuring project) and a longer time period, it is likely in part to relate to the regular telephone contact with the diarists during the period. Here only periodic e mail reminders were employed. A request for feedback on this research following the conclusion of the Stage 3 interviews elicited a number of relevant comments. Most managers found the task of recording their observations (as opposed to the observation itself) to be difficult and even onerous. The two main explanations volunteered for this were business priorities – there was never a convenient time, and unfamiliarity – both with the format/technique and with the open ended nature of the instruction. This feedback suggests possible modifications to any future attempt to use journals with this sort of respondent, including the use of telephone follow-ups.

Despite the low response levels, many of the respondents claimed to have made some specific observations. Certainly the range of examples offered during the final interviews supported this claim. Meantime those comments received in Stage 2 helped identify the topics for the final interviews, notably the revisiting of the annual employee survey and the focus on the role of performance management. It also suggested the idea of opening with a request for an example of recent engagement observed by the participant. Apart from the context specific work examples, the (few) general observations were also captured and included in the Stage 3 analysis.

4.3. Stage 3 – Manager paired interviews

As mentioned in section 3.3 a total of seven paired interviews and seven one-on-one interviews were obtained covering 21 of the 24 participants. In each case the interview commenced with discussion of examples of attachment/engagement recalled by the participants. These led quite naturally into consideration of what middle managers do to influence commitment and what they view as the things the organization does to influence commitment. It was noted that the paired interviews were characterised by a more informal exchange, with participants frequently discussing directly with each other the examples they were using to illustrate their points and their beliefs regarding attachment/engagement. This seemed to occur whether the pairs consisted of two colleagues with comparable, or differing, lengths of service. The comfort of speaking with a colleague, rather than a researcher, was very evident e.g. examples of banter between colleagues, more relaxed body language. For example, one respondent raised the issue of the organization seeking volunteers to work overseas for a few years, and noted the lack of take up as a symptom of diminished engagement. His partner in the interview teased him as being a perfect candidate and asked,

R1 “Why would that person not have gone to ... in your opinion?”

R2 “In my opinion not...”

R1 “Is it fear?”

R2 “No, it would be...”

R1 “Is it not pandering to the company need, is it a bit of a ship sailing off, I’m not doing that. What would it be?”

R2 “It would be small elements of those two, but mainly poor timing, family situation, commitments outside work...”

R1 “Through all the context outside ... In you opinion obviously, because we can’t answer for that person.”

Such discourse certainly aided this researcher’s attempts to make sense of the schema being adopted. Other indications of their level of interest and comfort were the volunteering of additional evidence and examples for the views offered and sequential development by one participant of an idea or opinion offered by the other.

Where paired interviews proved impractical (e.g. where one individual was unable to make the appointment) single interviews were substituted and in two instances these had to be via telephone rather than in person. The quality of the individual interviews were similar to those in stage 1, but generally a little more relaxed, possibly due to familiarity with the interviewer.

All the interviews were transcribed and corrected. Again extensive re-readings were used to seek potential answers to the research questions and any other related themes. The results are reported in the next six sub-sections. The first two cover the managers’ views on how attachment/engagement can be influenced by middle managers and by the organization. The remaining four sub-sections report on the other main themes covered in these (and in two cases the previous) interviews – the focus on performance, change fatigue, the performance management process and the organization’s measurement of employee engagement. Theme choice was essentially a result of their being raised as ‘important’ by several of the respondents as a part of their framework or explanation for the engagement characteristics and outcomes they observed. As previously, selected quotations are presented in the text, while more extensive quotations are provided in Appendix 2.

4.3.1 Managers’ influence on commitment

There seemed little doubt in the minds of any of the participants that generally they could (and should) influence the level of commitment of their direct reports. This was despite the occasional observation or recognition that some might prove beyond influence or remedy. A common theme was the need to understand the position of the individual and then relate any intervention to that:

“... striving to understand what they needed and trying to make work, align work that way”

DIE

Another sub-theme was the need to review messages from above/the centre and where necessary translate or interpret it so as to limit misunderstandings amongst the direct reports:

“... without altering the core of the message, but if it’s presented in a way that you say, God my team aren’t going to understand what that is, you need to find a way to translate that into something they can understand” D¹H

A number of the respondents focused on the perceived need for many, if not all, direct reports to experience some sort of self-development and or challenge to encourage their level of commitment:

“I think there’s a lot to be said for pulling people out of their comfort zone once in a while, and allowing them to fly a little bit more. Because that’s when you really see the spark in their eyes, that they’ve done something which is deeply uncomfortable” DBF

One respondent summarised his beliefs regarding attachment/engagement and his own list of the techniques he practised:

“... people at the end of the day want to be given responsibility, they want to trust their manager, they want to be respected, they want openness, honesty, and transparency... the words ‘I don’t know’ from a managerial perspective will save you millions, but also from an engagement perspective will save you... [also] spending time with people... and people who feel good and respected... understanding the rhythm of people’s feelings... having some empathy with people, these are all things that I think you have naturally within you and as a line manager...” D¹H

This last contribution reflected strands of several other respondents' thinking.

4.3.2 Organizational influence on commitment

Whilst most of the respondents acknowledged Y's interest and investment in fostering engagement among all employees, when asked to comment on how the organization can influence this, the majority of examples concerned not the 'enablers', but rather how the organization hindered rather than supported engagement. Six respondents commented on the debilitating effect of lay offs in connection with (regular) restructuring and the associated loss of benefits.

"It is on the back of four out of the last five years there have been redundancies and or change programs of some description... So even if you do it, you do it effectively, and it has a relatively low impact and I say relative because any sort of change of this size has an impact. You are still, you're still entering into a period of uncertainty and therefore, a level of disenfranchisement and distress..." R'M

"... within the community that are probably staying in the business, there's, there is a slight fear as well, keep your nose clean, keep your head down.." DIE

Three or four commented on the difficulties of reconciling the positive face to the outside (investor) world and the more negative outlook for the internal audience and associated reductions in benefits etc.

"... when we do the half year and the full year results there's a lot of razzmatazz, there's lots of stuff out to the City about how well Y does, which obviously we have to paint that positive picture, but getting the gangs to connect that positive picture to, you haven't been, you've lost your subsidy on evening meals in the canteen is just, I mean just can't make that connection" DUV

"... business has told me that that option is gone [early retirement] so I'm here for the long haul, I'm here until I'm 62 but I'm only 44" DIE

There were also comments on the effect that such downbeat communications can have on the middle manager as the intermediary, or messenger.

"In my new team, they understand... they kind of completely get that and they would ask me a few questions and say yes that's kind of interesting and fair enough do you know why this is, and did they tell you anymore about that and stuff. But I'm less the messenger being shot; I'm just the messenger and understood to be the messenger... [as opposed to old team] just got so sick of getting shot for delivering the message that I was being briefed on 15 minutes earlier, which I had no hand, act or part in, except I was briefed and told to go and brief the troops, you go and brief the troops and they shoot you, yeah" DCG

Interestingly the actions of the organization to reduce costs were viewed as hindering attempts to foster engagement and were often associated with the next two themes, both being seen as actually or potentially detrimental to attachment/engagement.

4.3.3 Focus on KPI's and performance outcomes

The one theme common to almost all interviews was Y's focus on getting continuous high and improving performance. The KPIs dealing with products and their delivery were singled out for their critical priority.

"... if they are not delivered, it doesn't matter what else you are doing. So be that health and safety, or cost, or waste, or right first time, whatever it may be. So my approach would tend to be to make sure that those bases are covered. And if they are, that if you like gives you the air cover and the autonomy to then go off and do the value adding stuff" DBF

Whilst the business case for this continuous improvement focus was acknowledged, several respondents noted the potential effect on attachment/engagement.

"... difficult from an engagement point of view because...[we are] a supply organization a manufacturing organization, the culture is a little bit different, KPI driven, and we are statistics driven" D'H

"...to think that modern business, with its focus on share holder value, causes them continuously to review what they are doing in order to stay in business, in order to grow the share price and that necessarily... some of it is getting more from less, continuous improvement... and it maybe viewed by the employees, as actually the reverse of benefit, actually we're the ones who are bearing the brunt of this in order to drive your shareholder value" DST

The laser like focus on continuing cost reduction and operational KPI's were viewed as squeezing out concerns over engagement and challenging two-sided exchange necessary for mutual benefit.

4.3.4 Change fatigue

A number of respondents commented on the continuing pressure for change and the regular reorganizations driven by attempts to reduce the unit costs of the product(s) going out of the gate.

"... and at the tail end of the implementation, lo and behold there's another change plan looming, from that point of view. So there is no doubt about that. Within our organization there is a change fatigue" D¹A

Again this was viewed as unhelpful to the fostering of mutual trust and engagement.

4.3.5 Performance management process

Almost all respondents commented on Y's formal processes for appraisal and performance management and several drew the link between this and the attachment/engagement of those seeking variously challenges, self-development and career progress.

"We have [appraisal] systems, we have development programs and we bitch and moan about them, and we sit down with the documentation... and, write down [on] paper and force you to do something about it... Even with someone in a role there's things you can do to broaden their networks, and broaden their horizons and get them connected up with people and development like in a way with supportive coaching" DUV

4.3.6 Measurement of engagement

Y's annual survey of employees which, amongst other things, measures levels of engagement, also received more critical than favourable comments from the middle managers.

"... they won't show you whether your people are highly motivated or highly unmotivated, it will tell you yeah they're all grand. So I think you get much more value out of talking to people yourself" DD

The most favourably viewed aspect of the annual surveys was the 'open ended' comment section, which was viewed as the more reliable and often used to spur discussions and initiatives seeking to improve attachment/engagement e.g. in placing more emphasis on recognising good work and long service and in one specific case decreasing the spans of control of shift managers to allow more interaction with team members.

"we have actually cut and diced the [survey], so the feedback that that team give now are about their manager, so we then ask them as a team to work out what they are going to do to resolve some of the low scores" RL

5. Analysis and discussion

Reviewing the overall results of this research, it seems clear that a number of the findings are influenced by their context. Firstly viewed from the corporate, or Y, point of view, all three sites are involved in the same industry sector and in the same functional area, supply and operations. This in part explains the very practical and organized approach of these middle managers, and their near religious commitment to the delivery of their products. It brings to mind a performer seeking to support a series of spinning plates each on a single wooden rod. Three of the plates – Product output, Product quality and Health & Safety – are vital to the performer (and the audience), while any other plates are relegated to the ‘nice to have’ category e.g. attachment/engagement.

The differing contexts at the site level also appear to explain some of the (small) differences between the site respondents. Two of the sites are more affected by the demand for their products. While providing leading brands, the overall market demand is declining and only one of these sites is seeing major new investment (and then only as a result of the closure of other nearby sites). The third sample site supplies a mostly growing market and appears less nervous about continuing survival. Nevertheless all three sites are united by their perception of a continuing pressure for efficiency savings including downsizing in what is seen as a war of attrition on cogs (cost of goods sold).

Against this background what is most notable is a series of near unanimous views voiced by the sample.

RQ 1. What, if anything, do middle managers understand by organizational commitment, and how do they describe it?

Nothing, at least nothing that is labelled commitment. They do not use the term. However, they use the terms attachment and engagement to describe the same phenomenon as described in the literature as either OC or employee engagement. The managers do not treat attachment/engagement to different targets e.g. organization, reporting manager, site location as discrete, but rather as some sort of collective attachment manifest in the wellbeing of the employee.

RQ 2. Whatever their vocabulary, what signs do they look for to assess the level of connection between their direct reports and the organization?

They look for a number of signs of attachment/engagement, chiefly ‘going the extra mile’, involvement, enthusiasm and energy. All of these are viewed by the managers as a means to desired (output) ends, *“be that health and safety, or cost, or waste, or right first time, whatever it may be”* DBF. Conversely, the *“more constructive and cooperative gestures that are neither mandatory in-role behaviours or contractually compensated”* or OCB’s as defined by Organ, 1989 cited in (Shore, et al., 1995, p. 1596) were either rarely mentioned (e.g. supporting others, ambassador) or not mentioned at all (e.g. attending organizational meetings, supporting organizational changes). This was despite extensive probing of the managers as to any other signs they looked for.

RQ 3. How do middle managers view OC as being influenced?

Leaving aside their own endeavours (dealt with in the following section), this sample of middle managers was clear that the context and culture of the organization had a big influence. They mentioned the positive impact of both engagement training (e.g. *“one of the things that HR will speak about will be ‘know me, focus me, value me’”* DRW), and recognition by the organization (e.g. *‘they were picked to do [a presentation to visiting VIPs] and there’s the pride I’ve talked about of what they have achieved’*

DV). However the bulk of their comments, 70%, referred to more negative factors; the frequency of restructurings causing change fatigue, the limitations of the annual survey causing gaming of the system, and the unwavering focus on output KPI's. Many gave the impression that it was not worth trying to pursue attachment/engagement unless and until the output measures were achieved – and therefore they gave less effort to the former. Despite these challenges and their reservations about the accuracy, timeliness etc. of the annual employee survey, most of the sample is not disaffected or cynical. They appear either positive or concerned.

RQ 4. Do middle managers believe they can influence OC, and if so how?

The managers regard it as part of their role (and most see this as assigned to them by senior management) to 'manage' their direct reports attachment/engagement. They mention various 'tools' that they can use – frequent one to ones with direct reports to identify their state of mind and what aspirations they have, task enlargement and special projects to augment the challenge/learning of individuals, coaching poor performers to improve and good performers to excel and act as exemplars for others, translating corporate messages into messages that are intelligible to the workforce.

How do these findings fit with the theoretical framework outlined in Section 3.2? Clearly the use of frequent one to ones with direct reports will result in middle managers believing they have a more specific and closer understanding of their direct reports' needs and feelings. This in turn probably fuels their perception that they need to translate corporate messages before delivery to the workforce. Both features lend support to the notion of agency theory operating in the commitment relationship. The findings in relation to social exchange theory are more nuanced. On the one hand middle managers support individual learning and coaching of their direct reports and view withdrawal of training and advancement opportunities by the organization as detrimental to commitment. And yet their prime focus is on output measures (the KPIs), the signs they look for (as signifying high engagement) almost all relate to going the extra mile, hitting targets etc. There is little or no mention of support for co-workers.

The absence of more frequent use of the term 'engagement' given Y's extensive use of the term, the middle managers' lower focus on it compared with KPIs, and the infrequent mention of OCBs have already been mentioned. This suggests an interesting dilemma for organizations that judge that their preferred strategic position is competition on price, namely that the vital ammunition for continuous improvement, i.e. worker cooperation in suggesting and executing cost saving innovations, may be increasingly withheld as the strategy continues, a vicious circle fuelled by disengagement. In summary this situation appears potentially unstable, while possibly representative of some other organizations. To misquote Oscar Wilde, nowadays 'business' may know the price of everything but the value of nothing. One of the most interesting aspects of this finding is the contrast with a study which spanned 10 years that showed that initial drops in commitment were eventually recovered (Grunberg et al. 2008). However, this is not necessarily inconsistent, since in that case there were only two reorganizations over the 10-year period. In Y there have been 3 in the last 5 years. This study may also reinforce the question of how deeply companies value OCBs referred to in (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore 2007). They note that employees' OCB's might yield outcomes that do not necessarily benefit the employer e.g. when they are at the expense of essential in-role activities.

6. Conclusion

The present research has thrown some light on each of the research questions and suggests that, although not a high priority for them in a cost cutting environment, middle managers do look for signs of attachment/engagement and seek to manage it in their direct reports. They use a variety of techniques. However, the strategy of the business can run counter to attempts to foster engagement, especially when the organization places higher priority on more measurable contributors to bottom line improvement. This is not always recognized in the performance management literature. One notable exception is Pavlov & Bourne (2011) who note, *“When organizational processes become the key object of PM initiatives, it is necessary to clarify two key issues: first, what these processes are and how they are related to organizational performance and, second, how they could be affected”* and *“Any PM initiative encounters cases in which existing organizational processes resist change when the new behaviour is incentivized without considering the strength of the mental model underlying the old process.”* [Ibid, p.113 and 114] Viewed even more broadly, this ‘bad’ outcome can result when an organization focuses excessively on the pursuit of numerical success criteria, to the neglect of the original purposes e.g. continuous improvement.

The research also showed the potential benefits of using a technique, paired depth interviewing, more frequently used in the commercial world (or medicine, or sociology) than in management research. Paired depth interviews facilitated discussion between the two interviewees, and occasional debate between them on topics where they did not completely agree, providing better insight into their views of attachment/engagement.

The limitations of the study include the use of specific business units within a single organization. Additional research would be required to ascertain whether other similarly placed organizations exhibited similar tendencies. Given the possibility that the incidence of continual cost cutting can over time fuel greater disengagement amongst the workforce, it would also be useful to investigate engagement levels over time in other organizations experiencing such an environment. There certainly appears to be no shortage of candidate organizations.

The apparent absence of and concern for non-task related citizenship behaviours is also worthy of further investigation. A recent paper found partial support for a mediating affect of the positive relationship between work group perception of high performance HR practices and OCBs (Kehoe & Wright 2013) On the face of it, this is inconsistent with the research reported here. It might be useful to look at the interplay of commitment and OCBs simultaneously amongst middle managers and their direct reports.

7. Appendix 1. One-to-one interview protocol

- **Opening**

Greeting, introductions, thanks for sparing time etc. + obtain signed release form

Purpose to explore managers' view(s) of peoples attachment to the organization [avoid wherever possible any mention of commitment or engagement etc. unless and until the respondent uses such term(s)] **Emphasise interest is in manager's view of his/her direct reports' attachments**

I'll record interview (so maximum attention to your views) – results only for use by me, any comments used anonymous. Check recorder is working.

Overall should take 45 to 60 minutes. Hope that's OK. Any questions.

- **Attachment**

Do you or other managers around here use any term to describe the attachment that your people feel towards the organization? **This formulation replaced with 'How does attachment work in your group?'** [Only if no term is offered, volunteer e.g. 'belonging'.]

What does it mean for you as a manager? How would you describe it? [Continue using their 'label' for attachment whether commitment, engagement or anything else]

What if any positive outcomes, do you associate with 'attachment'? Any negative outcomes?

- **Signs of attachment**

Are there any particular signs you look for?

Have you ever discussed level of attachment of one of your staff with them and, if so, how did that work? [An example ...]

Have you tried to assess level of attachment in your individual staff? If yes, in what way(s)?

If no, any particular reason(s)?

If attempt has been made, what did you feel were the strengths and weaknesses of that way of assessing the level?

Does the organization make any attempt to measure levels throughout the organization? If so, how?

If attempt has been made, what did you feel were the strengths and weaknesses of that way of assessing the level?

- **Conclusion**

Pick up on any perceived confusions, clarify their meanings

That was really helpful, and I greatly appreciate your sparing the time

If you would be willing I would really value your help with two further steps in the research, one is to keep a sort of diary for the next few weeks. Whenever you felt you'd spotted something relevant to this topic, just scribble yourself a note. I will arrange to collect any notes say once a fortnight, and then in a couple of months we'd get together for one final conversation about what you'd noticed

[Apologies if there has been an overrun on the 45 minutes]

8. Appendix 2. Selected extracts from Interviews

8.1. Sample of coding of signs of attachment

Part of an interview transcript, showing different coding of relevant passages.

“Yeah like... I think its reasonably easy as you said, you can get within two minutes of meeting somebody you can tell, I think if they are one way or the other. There might be some people in the middle ground that are a bit more difficult, because there are some people who... they like to keep the job, the job, the home is their home life, but they are engaged, they might not talk as passionately as others, so you’ve got to filter that.

So generally you’re looking for people who see the bigger picture I suppose, they are in it for more than the job and they are in it for more than just the salary and how is that demonstrated? Its people going above and beyond what would be required of them, and its people taking responsibility for stuff they might not have responsibility for, its thinking about others not just themselves, so it’s the impact on the organization not just on my role, so if I’m making a decision and stopping to think about actually for my business that’s the wrong decision even though it’s the right one for my area or department, and I think it’s people who have a positive outlook, so engaged people generally have a positive approach to issues, problems, change, whatever it is they would embrace that in a positive sense.”

Bigger Picture

Extra Mile

Supporting Others

Enthusiasm

8.2. Managers' signs of attachment

Sign of Attachment	Sample quotes from participants
Ambassador	<p><i>"... they would always talk up the company outside, whether there is something internal going on that probably gripes a wee bit" DG</i></p> <p><i>"organizing stuff that is outside work" RL</i></p> <p><i>"... ensuring that we do everything that we can to maintain [Y's] reputation in the way that we operate" RM</i></p> <p><i>"...I've got guys who come to me and saying, there is a fellow that I know works for [Y] ... And it will be one of the contractor guys and these contractor guys who've said they work for [Y] rather than work for [Z]" RR</i></p>
Bigger Picture	<p><i>"people who see the bigger picture I suppose, they are in it for more than the job and more than the salary" DH</i></p> <p><i>"drive on to do the best they can for the role and then for the business as a result of that..." DI</i></p> <p><i>"some people see the bigger picture and see the benefits" RQ</i></p>
Development	<p><i>"they can show an enthusiasm for their development" DE</i></p> <p><i>"you get a sense that people either want to progress or not ..." RQ</i></p> <p><i>"... a sense of wanting to better yourself, a sense of learning new stuff ..." DV</i></p> <p><i>"wanting to progress within the company" DT</i></p> <p><i>"actually stepping up for a new challenge" DW</i></p>
Energy	<p><i>"will perform at a higher level" DA</i></p> <p><i>"even before they say anything, it's you pick up some of their energy" DF</i></p> <p><i>"it's about that visible energy and aliveness ..." RK</i></p> <p><i>"... will go out and look at the performance of the line ... fix it and come back with suggestions... they are the energized ones" DB</i></p>
Enthusiasm	<p><i>"you just see the level of enthusiasm, willingness to take things on, to put forward where others wouldn't" RP</i></p> <p><i>"enthusiasm, I always like enthusiasm ... because if someone is genuinely enthusiastic ... say you are offering them a job, they may not be 100% au fait with it, but if they're enthusiastic they will learn" DD</i></p> <p><i>"I want to be here today, this is what I got out of bed for" DE</i></p> <p><i>"a positive approach to issues, problems, change, whatever it is they would embrace that in a positive sense" DH</i></p>
Extra Mile	<p><i>"they put the work in no matter what it takes to get them or what they have to do to get the task over the line" DG</i></p> <p><i>"... trying to go the extra mile, as opposed to just seeing that's what I do, that's my remit" DU</i></p> <p><i>"willingness to go beyond the scope, scope of your role" RN</i></p> <p><i>"people doing things that they are not asked to do, but seeing that they need to be done" DR</i></p>
Involvement	<p><i>"get involved and their willingness to move on with things" DW</i></p> <p><i>"the curiosity and the inquisitiveness displayed to learn more about the project" RK</i></p> <p><i>"they're doing fantastic work, and very passionate about it" DH</i></p> <p><i>"involvement in extra curricular activities ..." DC</i></p>

Supporting others	<p><i>"... its thinking about others not just themselves" DH</i></p> <p><i>"... how they deal with other guys as well ..." RR</i></p> <p><i>"... that manager that's asked me to do it and he'll help me and I'll help him" DG</i></p>
Time related	<p><i>"who would show up for work on time, day in and day out" RL</i></p> <p><i>"if they're really engaged then I will have it before the deadline and if they're not engaged on the day of the deadline I'll be chasing them" DC</i></p> <p><i>"how they turn up, and that can be as simple as what time of day does somebody arrive into work and what time does he leave" DC</i></p> <p><i>"you can see other guys who were here at twenty to seven in the morning or twenty to seven in the evening and regularly you can see they're not going till 10 minutes later" RR</i></p>
Trust	<p><i>"And that's when people's trust [is hit] and skepticism and then rumors start" DST</i></p> <p><i>[of disengagement] "... big element of trust, huge distrust" DR</i></p>
Turnover	<p><i>"in general we wouldn't have a high turnover of staff" DG</i></p> <p><i>"if they got something they really wanted tomorrow, they would have no attachment to stay" DU</i></p> <p><i>"have that attachment because they wouldn't then seek to go anywhere else" RP</i></p>

8.3. Manager's influences on commitment

Influence	Sample quotes from participants
Close contact	<p>"... striving to understand what they needed and trying to make work, align work that way" DIE</p> <p>"the trick is to find the right buttons or levers or whatever, to get these people more motivated if they are not particularly well motivated... I would have a routine one-to-one meeting with each of my direct reports on a weekly basis and a part of that conversation is... how's it going, anything on the mind" DCG</p> <p>"So that for any given individual you get to know them, you focus them and you show them that you value them" DRW</p> <p>"...and the constant one to ones with people and being able to empathize and listen to them and understand them" DUV</p>
Honesty	<p>"to deal with people from the bottom up and to see what they were thinking, and to bring more...more understanding and more honesty to it. And that subsequently leads to more engagement..." DF</p> <p>"I think it is actually the right thing to do, to be transparent and let people know" R'M</p>
Performance Management	<p>"We have [appraisal] systems, we have development programs and we bitch and moan about them, and we sit down with the documentation... and, write down [on] paper and force you to do something about it... Even with someone in a role there's things you can do to broaden their networks, and broaden their horizons and get them connected up with people and development like in a way with supportive coaching" DUV</p> <p>"[discussions]... will be forced by an annual appraisal system, which isn't just an annual conversation, it's at least a quarterly conversation... but it does feel sometimes a bit of a chore admin-wise" RK</p> <p>"... each one of these guys who have a performance conversation, so you know, where you need training, what development you need. I don't think we are getting the best out of them conversations because, we've had that much change in there... what we are not doing is you know, we will talk about continuous improvement. They are not drawing the next bit out of them..." RO</p>
Personal Development	<p>"so they need to be busy, kept busy and doing something that they enjoy or it becomes a blocker" DIE</p> <p>"it's about how you stretch them in their current role as well, how you get more out of their current role" DUV</p> <p>I think there's a lot to be said for pulling people out of their comfort zone once in a while, and allowing them to fly a little bit more. Because that's when you really see the spark in their eyes, that they've done something which is deeply uncomfortable" DBF</p> <p>"you need to be learning on going, and if the job's not delivering that, it's hey up and good luck and thanks for all the fish ... obviously one of the big needs is how do I keep them learning" DIE</p>
Recognition	<p>"Celebrating success is a simple, is as simple as walking down the line and saying look we had a really good day yesterday, thank you very much for that" DR</p> <p>"...you go up to [K] and then say look thanks a million for what you did there it was just fantastic, that's my job. Don't want your thanks, that's my job and then off he'd go" DRW</p>
Translation	<p>"that's what I'd do with my direct reports is actually, give them my interpretation of the announcement but also look to see what their interpretation of the announcement is" DIE</p> <p>"without altering the core of the message, but if it's presented in a way that you say, God my team aren't going to understand what that is, you need to find a way to translate that into something they can understand" D¹H</p> <p>"it's about knowing the message the actual essence of the message, you know strong enough that you can still get the message across, but you can use your style or use your own words, distil for the guys" DCG</p>

8.4. Organizational influences on commitment

Influence	Sample quotes from participants
Change fatigue	<p><i>"And there's been one wave after another, after another and after another, right to the point now where we've suddenly take a massive step change closing three or four [units], consolidating everything into one site" DBF</i></p> <p><i>"and at the tail end of the implementation, lo and behold there's another change plan looming, from that point of view. So there is no doubt about that. Within our organization there is a change fatigue" D¹A</i></p> <p><i>"The guys are starting to get a change fatigue" R¹M</i></p> <p><i>"So there's the apprehension coming through in terms of okay, we've just been through big changes previous and now we are going through new changes but they don't know what it is and its that constant battle of when will enough be enough, and it never will be and its getting that we're in a new climate now and I think it's very difficult for people" DST</i></p>
Engagement training	<p><i>"one part of the frame that we give our managers is around how to deal with those different situations if I can put in that way. So we do give some training, a quiet considerable amount of training to our line managers" DA</i></p> <p><i>"I mean obviously, they've explained things like engagement. We do have an engagement model" DW</i></p> <p><i>"one of the things that HR will speak about will be 'know me, focus me, value me'" DRW</i></p>
Events & Recognition	<p><i>"...we do the old corporate visits and we have our VIP's who do the tours once a year... here is the CI manager she is going to present on our performance, here's the engineering manager. So again seeing that energy through them, they were picked to do that and there's the pride I've talked about of what they have achieved" DV</i></p> <p><i>"...we just re-launched our recognition scheme here now where if a colleague of yours does something that's above and beyond the call of duty for want of a better word they can be recognized and they can get a reward for doing that" DRW</i></p>
KPI focus	<p><i>"... if they are not delivered, it doesn't matter what else you are doing. So be that health and safety, or cost, or waste, or right first time, whatever it may be. So my approach would tend to be to make sure that those bases are covered. And if they are, that if you like gives you the air cover and the autonomy to then go off and do the value adding stuff" DBF</i></p> <p><i>"... the things that are important to the business are numbers. Regardless of who you talk to at different levels in the organization, you articulate quite clearly that the numbers have to be it." DRW</i></p> <p><i>"you've got to get the [product] out of the gate, that's your bread and butter" DBF</i></p> <p><i>"... difficult from an engagement point of view because...[we are] a supply organization a manufacturing organization, the culture is a little bit different, KPI driven, and we are statistics driven" D¹H</i></p>
Measurement engagement	<p><i>"So, we were chasing the scores rather than doing the right things" DA</i></p> <p><i>"they won't show you whether your people are highly motivated or highly unmotivated, it will tell you yeah they're all grand. So I think you get much more value out of talking to people yourself" DD</i></p> <p><i>"I have some fairly significant question marks over its validity. And that's based on a couple of things first of all I think it has become almost like a point scoring exercise, which for me is the antithesis of what was it was originally set up to achieve... the other thing as well is that, there is a concern amongst many people now that actually you can't be completely honest with it, because if you are it could well be traced back to you as an individual that you've answered a particular set of questions in a negative way and that actually the anonymity that it proclaims to have isn't real" R¹M</i></p> <p><i>"... how accurate are surveys and it never always seems completely aligned to how I perceive things to be onsite... [also] we had a very low response rate and then last year we did something very different to make sure we had pretty much 100% response rate" RN</i></p>

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D. P3 - Wilmington



P3 – Middle Managers’ role in Organizational Commitment & Organizational Citizenship Behaviours

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Abstract

Organizational Commitment, OC, has regularly been found to be associated with various forms of organizational citizenship behaviour, OCBs. Both constructs have been explained with models based on social exchange theory (Blau 1964). Antecedents proposed for both constructs often incorporate the employee's perception of either or both of organizational and direct managerial support (POS and LMX), the former relating to the *organization's* treatment of the employee, the latter with the *direct manager's* treatment of the employee.

Because of the potential benefits to both the organization and the employees of high levels of OC and OCBs, and the lack of clarity regarding the direct manager's role, this research focuses on the role of the middle manager, if any, in the development of employee OC and OCBs.

This paper reports on a mixed methods investigation in one company, 'SW', a large international provider of business services based on the hire and rental of various capital assets to other organizations. SW was formed by a series of acquisitions by a private equity entity and has been undergoing a 'lean transformation' for approximately 6/7 years. Surveys were used to question a sample of 40 middle managers on their level of OC and their assessment of their direct reports' OCBs. A similar survey of the managers' direct reports sought their individual self-ratings of OC and OCBs as well as POS and LMX. In addition the manager sample participated in discussions using a mix of one to one and paired depth interviews.

The middle manager interviews showed that the managers encouraged both OC and OCBs in their direct reports and a variety of techniques were identified. The two surveys further confirmed that the direct reports exhibited high levels of both OC and OCBs. However, the employee surveys showed low levels of POS and LMX, a finding at variance with some other research literature. This supports the finding that in this organization the route to generate OC and OCBs did not pass through either POS or LMX. Instead it suggested that an alternative pathway (and motivation) might lie through the employees' practice of impression management and be self interested rather than selfless (Bolino 1999).

The context of this organization is discussed and suggestions for future research and practice are offered.

1. Introduction

Much of the academic literature on Organizational Commitment (OC) refers to Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCBs) as one of the main beneficial outcomes of commitment. Only employee satisfaction and turnover intentions receive more frequent mentions. This has not changed during a period of several decades, even while definitions of both constructs have been refined e.g. (Dekas et al., 2013; Klein et al., 2012). While the literature frequently refers to the association between OC and OCBs, relatively little attention has focussed on the role of the middle managers and how, if at all, they influence their direct reports' levels of OC and the incidence of OCBs.

A recent study of middle managers (in one large international food and beverage company) examined how they viewed the OC construct, and the signs that they looked for to identify high commitment (author's P2 study, 2013). Among the main findings, it was noted that the middle managers did not employ the term 'commitment' and split their references between 'engagement' and 'attachment'. Managers in the sample both observed and valued their employees' activities that went beyond the requirements of the job and contributed directly to the realization of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) e.g. ensuring that a machine could be run at the optimal speed. However, they did not appear to either observe or value similar activities that did not contribute directly to the KPIs. While one study of the supply and logistics function of an international organization is not generalizable, the results prompted further questions. Is the absence of any reference or comment on (non KPI related) OCBs an indication that they were not present? Or does this indicate that they were present, but either not thought worthy of mention, or thought to be associated with some other construct.

The significance of this issue stems from the likelihood that organizations value commitment not purely for its own sake, but rather for the perceived beneficial outcomes, including all OCBs. This paper reports on further research examining the link between OC and OCBs and specifically what role(s) the middle manager may play. If some OCBs are present, but are either ignored or not valued by the middle manager, then understanding the potentially negative impact may help mitigate it. If some OCBs are absent or significantly reduced, then consequential remedial actions may be observed among middle managers.

The area of (discretionary) employee behaviour, OCBs, was first studied by Organ and colleagues in the 1980s, and has been developed to encompass a number of different types of OCB e.g. altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue (Podsakoff et al., 1990). It remains an important reason for practitioner interest in OC e.g. (Gallup 2013). OCBs are thought to contribute to improved performance at both the work group and the organization level, Nielsen et al. (2012), as well as assist in raising both skill levels and quality control.

Other work on the OC – OCB correlation has suggested both the importance of the HR policies employed in the organization and the middle managers' enactments of such policies (Nishii et al., 2008). This supports the value of research into how the middle manager might influence OCBs. It also indicates a need for research questions that focus less on exploration (and sense making by middle managers) of OC, and more on what the middle manager does to create the desired employee organizational relationship and OC, that in turn may encourage OCBs. Another reason for this shift of research focus is that in relative terms the measurement of OCBs is clearer than that of OC. Indeed past research of OC and its definition and measurement has often been critiqued for confounding the OCB outcome with the OC construct itself (Klein et al., 2009).

2. How the OC – OCB link is viewed

This section briefly reviews the knowledge of the OC and OCB constructs and current thinking based on the literature. Much OC research uses Meyer and Allen's three component model of commitment (Meyer & Allen 1991). An extensive meta analysis, Meyer et al. (2002), showed significant positive correlations between the affective and normative commitment components of OC and OCBs (none with continuance commitment was found). It also noted that when studies used supervisor rather than employee rating of OCBs, the correlation was lower, $\rho = 0.27$ versus 0.37 for affective commitment [Ibid. p 37]. This suggests a potential for common method variance when using employee self-rating measures of both OC and OCBs. Meyer et al. further noted that the correlations were more positive in studies outside of the US than within, indicating possible societal culture effects.

Figure 1 summarizes several of the main literature themes. In the lower half, the three boxes linked by arrows to the OC box are some of the suggested antecedents via OC to OCBs, while those in the top half show other direct pathways to OCBs.

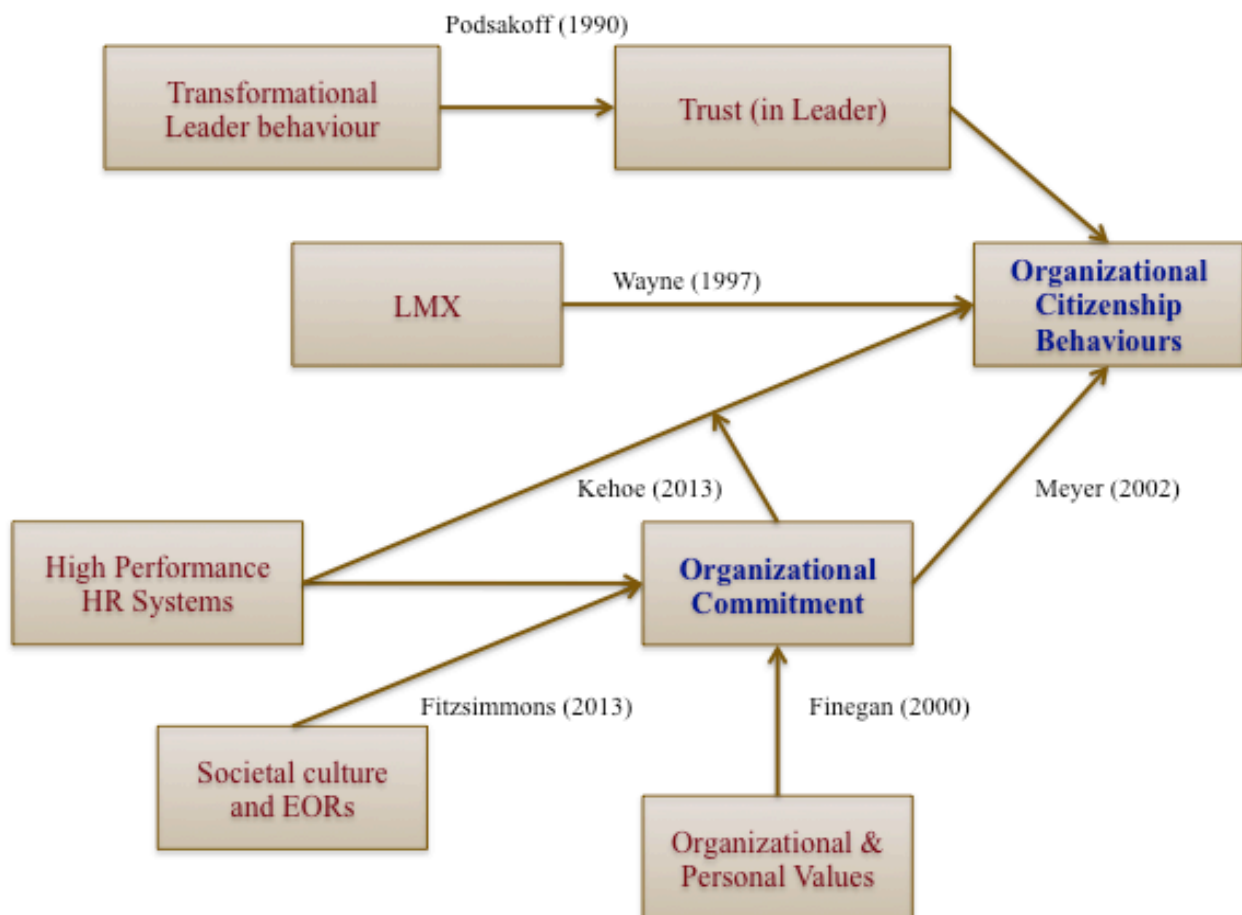


Fig. 1 A summary of some models of the links observed between Organizational Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behaviours

Among many antecedents that have been advanced to explain the development of OC, at least three offer routes whereby the middle manager may play a role. First, the HR policies in the organization have been frequently studied (in part to identify those systems more likely to induce higher levels of OC). High performance HR systems (HPHR) comprising a mix of ability-enhancing (e.g. selection and training), motivation-enhancing (e.g. performance rewards) and opportunity-enhancing (e.g. participation and information sharing) practices, have been found to enhance OC (Kehoe & Wright 2013).

Kehoe & Wright also found evidence that the employees' collective perceptions of HPHR practices are positively related to affective commitment, and that affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between HPHR and OCBs [Ibid. p 380-1]. The managers' potential role in this process could arise from their enactment of the policies and/or their direct encouragement of the desired OCBs.

Secondly, the societal culture in which the organization operates is thought to influence OC. A recent paper has suggested a complex interface between the espoused and enacted culture of the organization and the belief/preference of the individual employee. Friction in the employee organizational relationship can be introduced when the two are not sufficiently aligned (Fitzsimmons & Stamper 2013). Societal culture was taken to refer to one of three types: individualist, institutional collectivist, and in-group collectivist. Individualists were more likely to be motivated by a desire to matter, and less by a desire to belong. In-group collectivists were more likely to be motivated by a desire to belong to their in-groups, and less by a desire to matter. Institutional collectivists were more likely to be motivated by a desire to belong to their organizations, and less by a desire to matter. Fitzsimmons & Stamper also suggest that the organization reflects its societal culture in its specific choices of HR strategies for the employee organization relationship e.g. the relative use of transactional and or relational strategies. The middle managers' potential role in this model could arise from their enactment of the policies and/or their direct modelling of the societal culture.

A third frequently studied antecedent of OC overlaps with societal culture, but refers to organizational and individual values. Here the suggestion is that the more comfortable an employee is with the organization's values, the more likely they are to show high levels of OC – indeed some early definitions of OC referred directly to attachment to the organization's values e.g. (Buchanan II 1974). In one study the relevance of both organizational and personal values was investigated. It was concluded that the individual's perception of the organizational values (factor analysis was used to group these into 4 factors – humanity, adherence to convention, bottom-line and vision) helped predict both their affective and normative commitment levels (Finegan 2000). Notably, the association of the individual's personal values with commitment was never significant. As with the case of the influence of societal values, the middle manager may contribute by their modelling (or not) of the organizational values.

In addition to the direct link between OC and OCBs, research has also shown alternative pathways between the leadership behaviours of the direct report's manager and their subordinates' OCBs. Thus a correlation between transformational leadership styles (but not transactional) showed enhanced trust in the leader and thereby the incidence of OCBs (Podsakoff et al. 1990). Separately, leader member exchange (LMX) has been shown to correlate with OCBs (Wayne et al., 1997). Neither of the studies included OC in their model as either a mediating or moderating variable, although the second did include it, as another outcome alongside OCBs. These studies appear to suggest a pathway between middle manager behaviours and OCBs that may not include organizational commitment. If this turned out to be the case it could further suggest that the frequently observed association between OC and OCBs might be explained by a third variable e.g. trust in the manager, not normally measured in OC/OCB studies. Alternatively there might be multiple pathways coexisting and in which middle managers play some role.

In summary there appear to be a number of mechanisms through which middle managers might influence the development of their direct reports' levels of OC and OCBs.

3. The middle manager role(s)

Information on what middle managers do, as opposed to their responsibilities and duties, is scarce. According to Hales' (2001) review of half a century of research, the work that most managers do can be summarized in a list of 11 different activities. Amongst these, more than half (listed below) can be seen to involve interaction with their direct reports, either individually or as a group:

- *Acting as figurehead, representative or point of contact for a work unit.*
- *Monitoring and disseminating information.*
- *Planning and scheduling work.*
- *Allocating resources to different work activities.*
- *Directing and monitoring the work of subordinates.*
- *Specific human resource management activities.*
- *Problem-solving and handling disturbances to work flow.*

Selected items from list [Ibid. p 50]

Such activity provides middle managers with both an opportunity to interact with their direct reports and an incentive for them to encourage a 'good' employee organizational relationship. A study by Gilbert et al. demonstrated that both the managers' "*enactment of HR practices*" and their "*relation oriented leadership behaviour*", (as opposed to their task oriented leadership behaviour) contributed significantly to affective commitment of their direct reports (Gilbert et al., 2011, p1622). This study lends support to the idea that managers influence employees' OC. The tantalizing questions relate to how they do so.

One scenario is that the middle manager acts simply as an agent of the senior management or organization. The middle manager uses knowledge of the organization's values, vision, HR policies and other aspects of culture, and disseminates this to their team and encourages, exhorts or directs them to take account of it. This scenario suggests the persuasion of subordinates so they perceive that:

- a. the organization cares for them (Perceived Organizational Support, POS),
- b. the manager represents the organization (agency theory) and
- c. they would benefit from an enhanced relationship with the organization (e.g. Organizational Commitment, psychological contract).

A different scenario is that the middle manager signals a personal interest in, and care for, the subordinate and encourages, exhorts or directs them to take account of this. This scenario implies the persuasion of subordinates that the manager cares for them (transformational leadership styles and/or LMX), and that they would benefit from an enhanced relationship with the manager. Here the emphasis is on the middle manager's personal relationship with the employee i.e. not as an agent of the organization, leading to Perceived Supervisor Support and ultimately the manager as the target of the commitment (Supervisor Commitment). These two scenarios are illustrated in Figure 2 in the next section. Of course there are additional scenarios and even these two could operate at the same time. Individual team members also may be differentially affected and exhibit differing mixes of commitment to the two targets.

One study relating to the incidence of OCBs investigated the relationship between POS and LMX as predictors of OCBs (Wayne et al. 1997). This study tested the hypotheses that both LMX and POS would be positively related to the 'altruism' dimension of OCBs. Although this was confirmed, the relationship with POS was stronger and exhibited a higher level of

significance than with LMX – POS/OCB ($\rho = 0.221$ $p < 0.001$) and LMX/OCB ($\rho = 0.194$ $p < 0.01$) [Ibid. p101]. As the study was of just one corporation (and using a mailed survey) it is not clear if the result was primarily due to the organizational context.

A 15 month longitudinal study, Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe (2003), investigated turnover rather than OCBs as an outcome, and the contributions of both affective commitment to the organization and affective commitment to the supervisor. This confirmed significant correlations between perceived organizational support and affective organizational commitment ($\rho = 0.30$ $p < 0.01$) and between perceived supervisor support and affective supervisor commitment ($\rho = 0.73$ $p < 0.001$). However, only the perceived supervisor commitment demonstrated significant (negative) association with turnover nine months later. This is contrary to the Wayne study referred to above in that it suggests that the significant impact of the supervisor flows via personal impact (PSS) rather than organizational impact (POS). This study also appears to have a degree of generalization, drawing, as it did, on a sample of alumni of a Belgian University employed in a number of different organizations and industries.

Finally, in this section, it is possible to revisit the observation in P2 of middle managers failing to mention some types of OCBs. One of several possible explanations may be that, if the middle managers were increasingly focused on their task targets and KPIs, they might (intentionally or unintentionally) be signalling to their direct reports that (non KPI related) OCBs would not be highly regarded, leading to their limited manifestation by the direct reports. Such an explanation could be applicable whichever of the two scenarios above (or mix thereof) occurs.

The combination of current understanding summarized in the model in Figure 1, together with the indications of how the influence of the middle manager may be exerted (outlined above) argue for more research and a better understanding of the middle managers' role. The next section outlines how the research was approached.

4. Examining the employee organization relationship and OCBs

4.1. Research Questions

Previous research indicates that the employee organizational relationship can include both organizational commitment and the incidence of OCBs, Coyle-Shapiro et al., (2004), and that the employees' relationship with their direct manager or supervisor can also yield commitment (to both the organization and the supervisor) and OCBs e.g. (Wayne et al. 1997). What is not clear is how the middle manager in the role of managing their direct reports (both as an individual and as an agent of the organization) contributes to these processes. In particular is the route or pathway for influence on the employee more powerful via the manager's 'individual' or 'agent' role? This prompts the following research questions:

4. Do middle managers look for and encourage OC and OCBs in their direct reports?
5. If so, how do middle managers do this, and is OC or supervisor commitment the more important pathway to OCBs?
6. Do middle managers focus on those OCBs most related to task performance?

A schematic model of the relationships of interest is shown in Figure 2 and is similar in some respects to the models tested in both Wayne et al., (1997) and Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe (2003), as well as consistent with the current literature. Wayne tested the relationships between POS and both affective organizational commitment and OCBs, and between LMX and OCBs, while Stinglhamber tested the path of POS through affective organizational commitment and the path of PSS through affective supervisor commitment, both to turnover only.

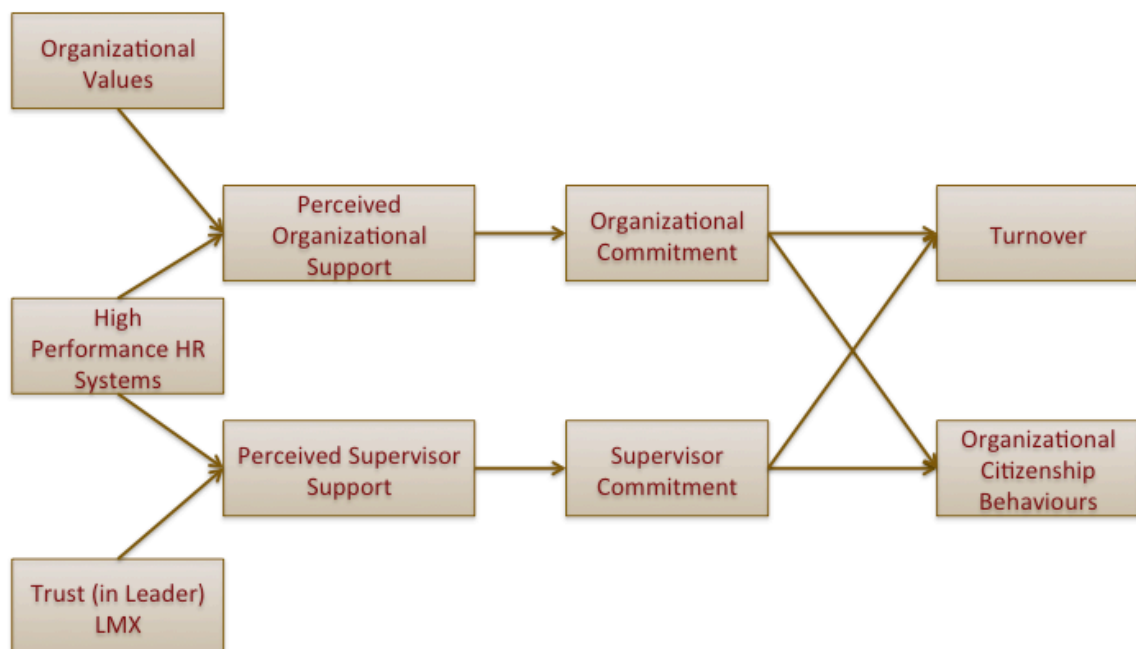


Fig. 2 Middle managers' potential roles in commitment and OCBs –
Based on (Wayne et al. 1997; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe 2003)

Most of the literature on OC and OCBs has adopted a positivist standpoint, assuming for example that individual levels of OC can be readily measured and that statistical methodologies such as structural equation modelling can elucidate the strength and direction of any causal

relationships. Such approaches have been critically reviewed by others, notably (Swales 2002). In addition to questioning whether or not researchers are actually measuring the chosen OC constructs by use of commitment scales such as from Meyer & Allen (1997), Swales also suggested, by way of example, that the frequently observed (negative) correlation between OC and turnover can as readily be explained as a result of the measurement technique, as by a ‘true’ relationship [Ibid. p159]. In addition Antonakis et al., (2010) amongst others, has questioned more generally the accuracy of correlations claimed in many empirical management studies. Against this background it is appropriate to be cautious of studies that claim specificity in measuring OC.

It has been argued previously (authors P2, Section 3.1. p 7) that as current definitions of OC are based on “... a volitional psychological bond”, Klein et al. (2012, p.137), and that the mix of conscious and unconscious judgements made to inform an employee’s perceptions will be affected by others (notably other team members and supervisor), therefore OC is best regarded as socially constructed and argues for an idealist ontology and constructionist epistemology. Indeed one review of the employee organizational relationship suggested, *“if the organization is represented by agents as well as coalitions and groups, and depends on the individual employee’s perception, it could be argued that each employee works for a different organization!”* (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007, p. 167). Ironical or not, I would support this view.

The foregoing also strengthens the argument for a focus on OCBs. Here the argument for both employee self-reporting and, more particularly, for middle manager reporting seems stronger. The latter relies on observation of behaviours, rather than any assessment of a psychological bond like OC. However, since the research questions assume that OC is probably a precursor of the OCBs and seek to explore the middle managers’ role in the relationship, it remains desirable to include some assessment of the levels of OC. A more detailed explanation is provided below under the proposed methodology (as are the ensuing difficulties).

4.2. Design and method

A core part of this study was the collection of middle managers’ views on OC and OCBs, their incidence, their value and how they as managers contribute to them. While the incidence of both OC and OCBs can be obtained by use of existing survey questions, experience of interviewing the middle managers in P2 confirmed that the richer material obtained by interview is more enlightening and explanatory than the use of surveys. Therefore an initial survey was designed to seek the view of each middle manager on the extent of OCBs within their team members. Follow-up discussions explored what the managers looked for and how they sought to manage both OC and OCBs. The follow up discussions employed (as in P2) a mix of one to one and paired depth interviews. This combination balances the benefit of paired interviews (the presence of a co-interviewee of similar background helps reduce tensions, encourages openness and mutual support, and affords the opportunity for the interviewees to discuss their experiences) while avoiding potential dissonance between supervisor and supervisee levels. Separately, the use of a similar research method for interviewing as was used in P2 contributed to methodical coherence. seen as a contribution to reliability and validity (Morse et al., 2008).

The research was conducted within one large organization where the impact of societal and organizational values and of HR policies should be mostly controlled. Within the selected organization a purposive sample of 40 – 50 middle managers from different functions was sought with the co-operation of the HR department. An initial survey asked for individual characteristics such as age, length of service, together with a series of questions relating to OCBs. Details of both the survey and the subsequent interviews are provided below and in the appendices.

It is important to re-emphasize that the constructs to be investigated are OCBs and OC. However, practicing managers rarely use the term commitment (let alone OC) and more frequently use the term engagement when referring to the affective behaviour of their direct reports, a point confirmed in P2. This may be a result of the term's frequent use by practitioners offering survey services and other consultancy to employers. As a result it was decided to employ the term 'engagement' when discussing OC and OCBs with the sample managers.

4.3. Organization and samples

A number of organizations were approached to provide a suitable base for the research. All were headquartered in English speaking, developed economies, and part of the for profit sector. They were also of sufficient scale to employ significant numbers of middle managers. Serious discussions were held with 4 organizations, but in the event all but one declined (citing reasons such as insufficient time available for access to the managers, current restructuring, and least convincingly legal advice that any survey data would necessarily be 'discoverable' in the event of litigation!).

The participating organization (SW) is a privately held, leading global business services provider with annual revenues in excess of \$2 billion, split across three regions, EMEA, North America and Asia Pacific, with a smaller business in Latin America. The customer base is other businesses across a wide range of industries. SW owns maintains and hires out capital assets that enable customers to both avoid tying up their own capital in ownership, and also allow speedy response to changes in requirements for such facilities. The headquarters are in the mid-Atlantic region of the USA and distribution in the USA is based on a network of 72 branch offices. It should be noted that the organization has for a number of years been undergoing a 'lean transformation' and consequently reduction of working capital, unit costs and headcount figure largely in their business model. This is similar to the context encountered in the organization researched in P2.

Following discussion with the HR department, the two most senior levels of SW's US management were excluded from consideration. The sample was drawn from the next two levels of management to provide middle managers (i.e. managers without direct input into organization level decisions thought to affect overall OC, such as HR policy, vision and strategic direction, organization values). This follows the definition of middle managers as people who are two levels below the CEO e.g. (Huy 2002). The sample also sought to represent a mix of 'branch' and 'head office' and the differing functional disciplines, so as to allow for differing views from managers with differing educational and professional qualifications. The resulting sample totalled 41 middle managers. In the event one manager was unavailable for interview by reason of an urgent relocation to another country for operational reasons. The remaining 40 formed the middle manager sample. In addition details of these managers' direct reports were collated, based on the availability of current e-mail address details (some staff were not allocated a company e mail). This yielded an employee sample of 197 (from a total 213 direct reports).

4.4. Surveys

The survey for the manager sample asked for personal details including gender and age (in 10 year intervals). Two further sections asked for their personal level of OC, and a rating of their direct reports' OCBs. The rationale for seeking the manager's level of OC was to enable the choice of pairings in the interviews and post-interview, to examine whether or not there was any pattern in either their assessment of their teams' OCBs or their answers in interviews that might relate to their own level of commitment. The rationale for seeking the managers' opinion of their teams' OCBs was twofold; first the meta analysis referred to earlier highlighted the potential for

common method variance (Meyer et al. 2002). Secondly, the unit of analysis in this research is the middle manager and thus their views on their teams' OCBs were thought most relevant to discussing the managers' techniques. A copy of the manager survey is attached as Appendix 7.1. Excluding questions of personal characteristics there were 28 questions.

Four of the five questions used to seek levels of OC were drawn from the recent reconceptualization of commitment, Klein et al. (2012); Klein et al. (2013), because they represent language more in tune with current work situations and are based firmly on the underlying notion of OC as a psychological bond comprising 'volitional' actions (Klein et al. 2012). A fifth question comprising a measure of affective OC from Wayne et al., (1997) was also included to check whether the more recent (Klein) measure produced different levels from the old. Questions included, "How committed are you to this organization?" and "To what extent do you care about this organization?" The older 1997 question from Wayne measured agreement to the statement, "I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help the organization be successful." Some practitioners argue that in today's climate such behaviour is no longer 'volitional' but rather a requirement of the job.

The OCB ratings also drew on recent work that updated the measurement of OCBs (Dekas et al., 2013). The authors argue that since the origination of OCBs 50 years ago, the work situation has evolved such that actions regarded as discretionary then are no longer, and that other actions have come to replace them as indicators of 'discretionary' activity. Examples of activities now seen as out of place as OCBs include not taking extra breaks, spending time in idle conversation, and arriving punctually each morning. One new activity classified as an OCB is taking part in social activities during the workday that are not directly related to core job tasks. The new instrument employs a total of 23 questions that can be grouped in five areas:

- Helping others
- Improvements
- Involvement and participation
- Involvement with co-workers
- Well-being activities

Examples of OCB statements included, "Willingly helping others solve work-related problems" and "Keeping up with organizational news (e.g. organization-wide announcements, organizational changes, etc.)". Managers were asked, "Thinking specifically about your direct reports, to what extent have you observed them engage in any of the following activities?"

SW also agreed to a second survey being sent to direct reports of managers participating in the study. A copy of the employee survey is attached as Appendix 7.2. This used the same questions as the manager survey to measure OC and OCBs, and a reworded introduction for the OCBs, "... seeks your views on different types of discretionary activity that have been observed in the workplace and the extent to which you have personally participated in any of them in your organization. Please enter your answers for each of the statements in the following 5 groups." In addition the employee survey sought ratings of Perceived Organizational Support, POS, and Leader Member Exchange, LMX. These were taken from Wayne et al. (1997) and are shown in Appendix 7.2 p 33 and 34. Excluding questions of personal characteristics there were 44 questions.

The rationale behind the use of the two separate surveys was twofold. First, it was hoped to use the manager's commitment levels as a guide to choosing the pairings in the manager interviews (the sample of 40 managers were interviewed in 14 pairs and 12 one to one interviews). However, in the event this proved impractical, because of a delay in launching both surveys

such that the employees had not yet completed their surveys by the time the manager interviews were being scheduled and some of the managers had barely completed their survey prior to their interview (in one case only the day before).

Secondly, after the interviews the survey results were to be used to compare the employees' view on their participation in OCBs with their managers' view of the team overall, mindful that previous research had suggested managers were more severe in their assessments (or in what they regarded as an OCB). The employee surveys were also used to explore whether or not there might be some differences in POS and LMX results that might indicate the pathways to OCBs. In the event 38 of the 40 managers completed surveys (95%) and 105 of the 197 direct reports (53%).

In addition, by seeking employee views of their own OC and OCBs this permits a degree of triangulation between their self-reports and the managers' views offered during interview (a further benefit of using mixed methods).

4.5. Interviews

Within SW, 'engagement' (and not OC) was the common vocabulary in use in both HR and the wider management group to refer to positive affective feelings among the workforce. However, there is currently an on-going and lively academic debate as to the utility of the construct of engagement and whether or not it differs from OC. Professor Guest in evidence to the UK Government report on employee engagement went as far as to suggest that, "... the concept of employee engagement needs to be more clearly defined [...] or it needs to be abandoned" (MacLeod & Clarke 2009, p.8). In contrast Macey & Schneider (2008) seek to position OC as a facet of what they term 'state engagement'. The position taken in this research design does not reflect the author's view on this debate, but is rather a pragmatic response to the situation within SW and the managers' vocabulary in practice.

In order to communicate clearly with respondents, the term engagement was used with participants in the manager interviews. It will be seen that in terms of their responses, the managers appeared to be describing and reflecting on the phenomenon referred to in the academic literature as OC e.g. referring to the higher levels of energy and enthusiasm of those 'more' engaged.

Both surveys' language also employed the term engagement for the phenomenon. However, survey questions taken from established scales retained the language of 'commitment'. As one example of this 'translation', a copy of the researcher's original invitation circulated to all participants is shown in Appendix 7.3. The term (engagement) is highlighted in yellow and is a proxy for OC. A separate earlier introduction and invitation from the organization used similar language. The researcher's invitation also includes a brief explanation of 'citizenship behaviours'.

The interviews used a semi-structured protocol that focused on what managers looked for and how they managed OC and OCB's (Appendix 7.4). The protocol was piloted with two managers from different organizations to test length and comprehension. The pilots did not result in any structural changes but lent support to two 'probing' techniques derived from previous research; first requesting respondents that described their reports' levels of engagement as "all very good" to give examples of observed behaviour from the very best/highest and from the least highest of their direct reports; secondly asking respondents seemingly unable to articulate what, if anything, they did as managers to influence their direct reports engagement or citizenship, what they would advise a new managerial colleague to do in each of these areas. All interviews lasted between 50 and 60 minutes.

5. Analysis and results

5.1. Manager interviews

The 26 interviews (14 paired, 12 one to one) were transcribed, and then checked for accuracy against the original recordings. Using NVivo, each transcript was initially coded against the manager or managers being interviewed, and the main categories of the research questions. The first grid of nodes is shown below in Table 1.

Primary Nodes	Secondary Nodes	Subsidiary nodes (if any)
Manager/Managers	○ Interviewees	
Engagement:	○ Signs observed or looked for ○ Management techniques used	
Citizenship:	○ Signs observed or looked for ○ Management techniques used	Five categories of OCB's used in the prior surveys: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping others • Suggesting improvements • Involvement with organization • Involvement with co-workers • Well being

Table 1. Initial coding structure

There followed three iterations of review and refinement of the nodes. The developments included both introduction of subsidiary nodes e.g. to distinguish groupings of management techniques mentioned by respondents, and also new primary nodes drawn from emerging insights e.g. comments on communications and needs at both work unit and organization levels. The emergent grid is shown below in Table 2.

Primary Nodes	Secondary Nodes	Subsidiary nodes (if any)
Manager/Managers	Interviewees	
Engagement:	○ Signs observed or looked for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual and vocal clues • Energy, enthusiasm • Humour • Initiative, ideas • Helpful, over & above • Pride in work • Seeking learning • Anticipation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management techniques used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual observation, relationships and caring • Encouraging initiative taking and ‘ownership’ • Personal development and coaching • Fostering ‘fun’ climate • Respect, recognition and rewards • Pick up on ‘issues’ quickly • Explaining communications and changes from centre/senior management • Setting good example, open door
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Causes, ‘beliefs’ 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Targets of engagement 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Variation in levels 	
Citizenship:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Signs observed or looked for 	<p>Five categories of OCB’s used in the prior surveys:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping others • Suggesting improvements • Involvement with organization • Involvement with co-workers • Well-being
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management techniques used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify, raise expectations and explain context • OK going over and above • Support ideas for improvement, empower • Fostering ‘fun’ climate • Use ad hoc groups to explore initiatives • Respect, recognition and rewards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Variation in levels 	
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Big picture, strategy 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Changes (incl. personnel) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intra team relations 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trust, confidentiality 	
Disengagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Signs observed or looked for 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management techniques used 	
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formal reviews 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informal, coaching 	
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aims (engagement) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Techniques, tips 	
Other ‘issues’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communication from centre 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Team building activity, social 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training 	

Table 2. Final coding structure

An example of coding is included as part of an extended list of verbatim comments from the interviews as Appendix 7.5. The process commenced with two readings of the individual transcript before any coding. This was followed by a mark up of the transcripts in relation to the initial coding structure shown in Figure 1. [This initial structure was itself created after several readings of the first five interview transcripts and mindful of the research questions]. Once all of the transcripts had been marked up a second expanded coding was carried out to refine the separation into similar aspects of managers’ responses. Finally the process was repeated to gain the final coding in Figure 2.

The most powerful impression emerging from all of the interviews, even before any

transcription, was the very high levels of organizational commitment of the middle managers themselves. Virtually without exception they manifested high levels of energy and enthusiasm for their organization. One ‘symptom’ was that there were no ‘no shows’ and interviews started on schedule, both unusual in interviews with middle managers (personal experience including 20+ years consultancy comprising interviews with middle managers in many industry sectors). There were only two changed appointments (for operational reasons, including one that required a telephone rather than in person interview). Typical remarks included, *“I’ve worked at a lot of different companies myself and this is the first company that I have actually had that kind of experience with the encouragement and the empowerment yeah I think its unique for [SW]”* and *“... if I didn’t buy into this company 110% if I didn’t feel as though this was the best organization with the best equipment and the best service, I wouldn’t be able to project that to the customer”*.

Because both the invitation to participate and the prior surveys highlighted the researcher’s interest in the topics of engagement and citizenship, there is little way to directly judge the salience or interest in the topics for participants. However, some other indicators were apparent. Respondents had no difficulty in discussing the topics and responding to probing of their views with multiple examples. The contribution levels were high and there was never a risk of interview sessions ‘drying up’ or under-running. The biggest indicator of participants’ interest was the frequency of remarks on the importance of both engagement and going over and above the job description, mentioned in 4 out of 5 interviews (n=26).

“... if these guys didn’t go above and beyond their job description, half this stuff wouldn’t be done” and

“... because we are so tight right now, so lean that there is no room for you not to be engaged, and to pull your weight”

This emphasis on the importance of engagement and citizenship permeated all of the interviews and contributes to answering the first of the research questions. In SW there is no doubt that middle managers look for and encourage OC and OCBs in their direct reports.

The remainder of this section, 5.1, is arranged in order of the main findings in relation to the primary nodes, first on Engagement (Signs, Management Techniques and Targets) 5.1.1, secondly Citizenship (Signs and Management Techniques) 5.1.2, and finally other issues 5.1.3. The inclusion criterion for a ‘finding’ was for it to be voiced by more than just two or three of the managers, and spread over three or more interviews. Sample quotes are included in the text. Other quotes are reported in appendix 7.5. One issue will be immediately apparent. The middle managers have difficulty distinguishing engagement and citizenship and sometimes describe engagement in terms that resemble the outcome behaviors (OCBs) that are thought to result from engagement. They also conflate the targets of any such engagement (whether to organization, manager, job or profession, or to co-workers).

5.1.1. Engagement

Signs observed and or looked for

Most respondents mentioned four or more of the eight indicators drawn from the analysis (see Table 2). The most frequent mentions were those indicative of an attitude e.g. energy and enthusiasm. Few of the managers reported on signs of engagement in relation to the organization (see later sub-section on Targets).

Responses indicative of ‘attitude’ included,

“... they have a higher energy level ... there’s enthusiasm, they enjoy what they do and in general, they get along with their peers. They interact well together, they don’t fight with each other, there’s not arguing and bickering ... All those type of items, I think it’s been you know, it’s a positive atmosphere here ...” and,

“you see people that are always asking to learn new things; that’s a good sign. Or, are willing

to take on new things and always asking questions, or "What else do you want me to do? What else do you need me to do? ... every job has issues, some people will complain about the problem, some people come and offer solutions for the problems ..."

Some managers when describing the signs of engagement made specific references to motivation,

"It shows me that they are here; they want to be here, they want to help out and they want to see us succeed." and,

"But I think then engagement helps with the motivation and the desire to complete the task or do as best they can on the project."

Responses related to task performance outcomes for which the managers are responsible included employees volunteering, working late, and being conscientiousness about quality. Still others related to actions better associated with OCBs e.g. *"... if I see the guys joining in, coming up with ideas that would improve our processes, taking an initiative"*. This distinction is subtle. The principle is that if the sign is associated with the employee's direct task responsibility it relates to task performance, whereas if it does not and is volitional, it likely relates to OCB's. For example, staying late to resolve rush orders (a task fulfillment), versus staying late to check that a customer has received their delivery (a discretionary action that may prevent subsequent complaints, reworking etc.). This distinction is representative of a critique of the OCB construct that suggests that the discretionary characteristic is itself arbitrary and capable of only subjective judgment and hence difficult to operationalize. This critique includes the question of whether such discretionary activity is or is not 'in role' (Podsakoff et al., 2000). On balance it seems reasonable to stick with Organ's description of how discretionary can be both understood and discerned [Ibid. p 20-21]

Management techniques

As with the signs of engagement, there was widespread agreement on what managers did (or thought they should do) to encourage engagement. This started with paying careful attention to individual direct reports and assessing their motivation. This managerial observation of the individual was seen not as a one-off event, but a continuous monitoring, *"...as a manager you have to know who you are dealing with before you can deal with them"*, and something that underpinned one's choice of other techniques or interventions, *"...we can't use the same approach with everybody it just doesn't work"*. The respondents exhibited concern on behalf of each of their direct reports. For example, one respondent referred to the possibility that there might be no opportunity for a member of his team to advance within SW,

"... I'm very proud to say that I make you better and more valuable to other employers than you stay here."

To the researcher this appeared to go beyond treating the employee solely as a source of the output necessary to comply with performance requirements.

Beyond setting a good personal example (e.g. a positive attitude, chatting with direct reports, an 'open door') the next most frequent technique mentioned (two thirds of respondents) was encouraging their direct reports to be forthcoming with ideas and initiatives, first by recognizing and welcoming examples of such behavior, secondly by responding to issues or problems raised by their direct reports with questions of what they would recommend. Several of the managers commented on the need to respond as fast as practical to such ideas by trying them out or seeking clearance to do so, and others mentioned calling out successful examples in e.g. team meetings. In this way they sought to foster the behavior and build 'ownership' in some of the process changes.

Similarly a majority of the managers reported using personal development and or coaching of the employee. Often based on prior knowledge of the individual's personal career goals, the manager can modify existing tasks, introduce new ones, or assign 'project' style tasks to a direct report to both allow an interest to be developed and also provide an opportunity for growth and skill development. A few managers specifically mentioned that voicing their own (high) expectations provided a boost to confidence and or a suitable challenge. Managers saw the provision of an opportunity for such growth as a powerful tool to encourage engagement, *"Instead of us telling them what to do, what should I do, what would you do, how can I fix this and then they started to really be engaged ... wow he's given me the opportunity to actually make my own decisions"*.

A minority of the sample mentioned the provision of social 'opportunities' (e.g. celebrating birthdays or a barbecue) as techniques for stimulating engagement. However, several others also mentioned these benefits of having/encouraging a 'fun' environment in the workplace elsewhere in their interviews (e.g. in comments on citizenship and their direct reports arranging such events). The difference seemed solely related to whether or not the manager had initiated the activity.

Almost universally the sample noted the importance of respecting others and the recognition and rewarding of good behaviors. From the simple acknowledgement or thank you, whether to an individual or in front of the work unit, to the receipt of a financial award, or comments in annual reviews or from senior management, the view was held that these responded to deep needs to be valued, *"It's all in how you manage your people and value your people, and they will, they will bend over backwards for you"*

Another action related to urgency and the need to respond urgently to any 'issues'. These might arise from the on-going observation of individual behaviors and checking for information as to why the individual was, for example, less engaged than was usual. While opinions differed as to the amount of intrusion (or consequential action) that was desirable if the source was extra-work e.g. domestic, there was agreement that any intra-work issues should be (and be seen to be) responded to rapidly. Examples included dealing with an aspect of organizational bureaucracy (a switch to greater use of on-line HR services that had resulted in there being nobody to speak with) and individual co-worker tensions.

The last reported action concerned the transmission or explanation of messages and information from the central organization or senior management. The managers argued for greater transparency within SW and described their practices of editing, filtering and otherwise translating the available information. One manager summarized the need, *"If it's not confidential I want them to know what the strategy is, what the direction is, what the company is thinking, what the big picture is, because they feel part of that ..."*, while another described the situation after first announcing two departures, one to another department, the other a resignation, *"[I] explained what was happening, why it was being done, and I tried to steer anything that could be technically seen as negative as positive"*. The apparent irony of seeking greater transparency from the company, while 'doctoring' the messages to their direct reports went unremarked.

Targets

Despite the care taken to identify the research interest as organizational commitment (e.g. both surveys contained questions like "How committed are you to this organization", and the introduction to each manager interview referred to the interest being in their direct reports' "engagement with the organization"), the respondents appeared to have difficulty in thinking of engagement with any single target and particularly with the organization. Some simply conflated

the targets, *“I feel I can say they are engaged, they are committed to the company, the branch and me, and it makes life nice”*. Others suggested smaller sub-groups within the total organization, *“I think most of the engagement is because of the local, because of the branch ...”* and *“I think people’s engagement is more of what they can feel and touch and see and they come in contact with on a regular basis ...”*. In addition to making it difficult to interpret the managers’ views, if any, on the research question dealing with the pathway to OCBs, via either OC or supervisor commitment, their ‘indifference’ to the target of engagement suggests they may value more the outcome (the OCBs) than the presumed cause (the engagement).

Thus in the sample as a whole, references were made to various other targets – the job or profession, the local work unit, the middle manager, and the co-workers. It appeared of no particular interest or importance to the respondents as to which (or what mix of) targets the employee was engaged with; what mattered was simply that they were engaged. However, the majority were quite clear and claimed that irrespective of any mix they, the managers, were the key partner in engagement, *“...my feeling is at this point in time, the morale for the employees comes from us as the managers, not really from the company”* and *“I think employees tend to view the organization the way they view their supervisor, in terms of if their supervisor is engaged with them and they feel part of the team from that perspective, then they also feel part of the larger organization”*. This may be a response that ties in with a contextual issue, namely the radical change and lean transformation that has been underway at SW for at least 5/6 years. On the other hand the survey of direct reports did not demonstrate a major difference between POS and LMX scores as might be expected if the direct reports differentially attributed the trauma of the changes to the senior management and the organization or to their supervisors.

5.1.2. Citizenship

Signs observed and or looked for

The survey questions on OCBs were split into 5 areas;

- Helping others
- Suggesting improvements
- Involvement with organization
- Involvement with co-workers
- Well-being

Interestingly, although the interviews occurred after the managers had completed their surveys, their interview comments focused almost entirely on the first two areas (helping others and suggesting improvements). These are the OCBs most directly linked to performance targets. Only a few managers mentioned examples of the other three areas. Although the managers’ survey results are less starkly differentiated (see 5.2), their mean scores were higher for the first two (plus well-being) than for the involvement areas.

Within the ‘helping others’ category most examples quoted in the interviews dealt with either individual help with other (co-worker) workloads or problems, or a broader area of teamwork, often to satisfy customer needs. An example of the latter from a sales perspective, *“if someone is overwhelmed with a lot of projects themselves, maybe they’ve got one or two larger new sales, and ... they can’t dedicate the time to it, they have passed it over to another team member and given them the opportunity so that the branch doesn’t...[SW] doesn’t lose the opportunity to bid on it, or work the project or potentially win it”*.

The ‘suggesting improvements’ citizenship often overlapped the discussion of engagement, with the same example being used as both the manager’s technique of managing engagement (i.e. seeking ideas from the direct report) and welcoming their suggesting solution as citizenship (i.e. going beyond the job description). This provides further evidence that the managers’ prime concern is to facilitate the outputs and performance levels and a lesser concern for

which of several targets attracts the employee engagement and contributes to ‘going over and above’.

Management techniques

Some of the techniques reported by managers for fostering citizenship are similar to those they use in fostering engagement e.g. supporting direct reports’ ideas for improvements, and fostering a ‘fun’ climate. This is partly a result of the middle managers viewing specific OCBs as not simply an outcome of the direct report’s engagement, but as a component of engagement as they perceive it. One example of this thinking,

“We have our [...] guy, he is so engaged and he's really motivating to the other guys. I mean he ... you give him something new like when we said you are going to take over our [...] control, he went home that night and started Googling on the internet and started Googling Lean Processes in the warehouse and he would come in the next day, ‘Hey I just learned about such and such do you think we can try it?’ Sure yeah try let's do it you know.”

For this manager the suggested improvement is linked with the eagerness to try it out and part of his ‘engagement’ behaviors.

Despite this conflated view, the managers’ starting point for intervention if fostering OCBs is somewhat different from that when promoting engagement. They appear to set greater store by clarifying their expectations of employees and setting out the context and importance of OCBs,

“I talk about how important it is if we're going to succeed. We don't succeed on our own, we depend on one another ...”, and “Some people need to be told that it's okay to do things outside your job description”.

The managers’ OCB techniques included seeking opinions or advice from direct reports individually or in small groups and offering support for their working on e.g. improvement projects. Some scheduling and allocation decisions are also thrown open to inputs from those affected e.g. decisions on overtime, or vacation coverage. Notably some managers introduce changes decided by higher management in a consultative manner so that they can be ‘adapted’ to local requirements. Again the use of small groups was reported,

“Well, I'm going to bring in four people ...we're going to get everybody together and so I'm going to say, what do you think, and I've already given them this, you think about it over the weekend because next week we're going to talk about it.”

As with engagement, respect, recognition and rewards are seen to enhance OCBs. One manager mentioned taking a subordinate to a meeting with senior managers and calling attention to their contribution to the project. Another referred to senior managers visiting a branch and introducing them to an exemplary direct report,

“I call it ‘press the flesh’, that is what I call it. If they've helped a certain process... I try to make sure that the upper supervision when they do tour, I want to give those guys, to bring them forward and say, “Hey by the way I want to show you what [X] did.”

5.1.3. Other issues

Communication

More than half of the interviews made unprompted mention of the importance of communications in the context of fostering both engagement and OCBs,

“Again it all ties back to communication from the top-down to the bottom-up. I think everybody needs to know what page everybody else is on and I think that's how you have a really engaged company.”

Although not everyone was expected to be interested, the managers agreed that they needed to provide a context for what was going on and a ‘big picture’ of where the company was heading,

“I talk big picture, stuff that's been sent down from the pipeline above... sometimes I see their eyes glaze over, and that it may be too much information, but in my opinion knowledge is important and power, and the more they learn the better off they will be...” and,

“You keep them apprised of how we are doing day to day. And I believe that that helps them

feel a part and be more of a part, a genuine part than just waiting to be told what to do next instead. The buy in, the understanding, it's just a whole morale change..."

On the other hand while many felt SW did a good job of communicating, almost half of the managers had some criticisms of how well the communication role was being performed. This is not unexpected and complaints about communication can sometimes represent code for other criticisms. Here, given that the managers regarded themselves as part of the communication process, the focus was primarily on the absence of enough timely flow of information from above/the centre. One respondent drew a contrast with a previous employer they had experienced,

"I don't think we have that, I don't think that we have that same level of communication that would draw people in to understand what's happening around them."

There was a sizable minority (around seven or eight managers) that had issues around the quality of the information provided,

"Like we said, okay, we are going to do an IPO sometime and nobody is really...last year we were talking about this and we had a change in management. Well, we really haven't communicated to people since then..." and, "There was mass confusion [related to a senior manager departure], and you know like I said we are lucky, because we can treat it indifferent because we've seen so much, but in a situation like that you feel abandoned again."

This distrust extended to both a reluctance to give specific (identifiable) details of individuals in some of their examples, *"I have been with this company so long and I've done a lot of different surveys, where they say are very confidential, and yet they know exactly who or what I said and when I said it so ..."*, and also to advice from a couple of managers not to be concerned by return rates from their direct reports' surveys (as was apparent in the levels achieved), because they said that previous guarantees of confidentiality had been abused. Much of this concern was related to the downsizing consequent on the lean transformation.

Disengagement

Without probing, many of the interviews (23 of 26) volunteered discussion of 'disengagement' and the majority agreed that apparent examples should be quickly investigated and addressed. Investigating evolved naturally from the continuous monitoring of their direct reports (mentioned under techniques for managing engagement) and addressing disengagement depended on the perceived explanations. Actions included exhortation and coaching or assignment to activities that might raise interest levels.

Additionally the majority of managers felt that there were some people where remedial actions would not work, *"for some people this is just a job, this is just where I come eight hours a day to collect pay cheque ..."*

They also agreed that in such circumstances (after allowing a fair opportunity to re-engage) then continued employment was not an option, *"...if you get somebody that's not happy with their job you have to make them move along"*

Mostly the managers attributed disengagement to people not liking change, together with the considerable amount of change experienced in the recent years,

"Try to dig down see what's going on with him, why he is like this and hopefully you can resolve it but if not, some people are just so set in their ways as [co-interviewee] was saying, we change constantly and people can't do it and that usually what is the problem. They just can't handle the changes. So unfortunately those are people that have to move on."

Recruitment

Unsurprisingly the managers felt it important to look for the seeds of engagement when recruiting new people, although some suggested this is not an easy task.

“It's really hard to tell in the interviewing process. I mean they are going to a lot of times tell you what you want to hear.” and,

“I have an employee right now... who is very capable... but they don't want to take on anything new... they just want to do their own little, their own little thing... well to me that's not the type of employee that I really want to have.”

As with other comments on engagement and OCBs, the managers are clearly focused on achieving highly flexible and dedicated staff that will adapt to the (changing) future while delivering the outputs required of them.

5.2. Manager survey

38 of the sample of 40 managers (95%) completed their survey. There is little to distinguish the two non-respondents (one male, one female; one branch, one head office; one younger, one older) from the respondents.

Question	Response	Number	%	Question	Response	Number	%
Location	Branch	20	52.6%	Tenure with organization	< 12 months	2	5.3%
	Head Office	18	47.4%		1 - 3 years	7	18.4%
Gender	Male	24	63.2%		3 - 5 years	3	7.9%
	Female	14	36.8%		> 5 years	26	68.4%
Age	Less than 25 years	0	0.0%	Tenure with current manager	< 12 months	17	44.7%
	26 - 35 years	5	13.2%		1 - 3 years	8	21.1%
	36 - 45 years	10	26.3%		3 - 5 years	10	26.3%
	46 - 55 years	18	47.4%		> 5 years	3	7.9%
	56 years or more	5	13.2%	Work Area	Accountancy, finance & admin.	18	47.4%
					Customer services	2	5.3%
					Marketing & Sales	5	13.2%
					Operations	8	21.1%
					Branch manager	5	13.2%

Table 3. Manager survey respondent characteristics

The sample comprises a range of ages, work area and both organizational and current manager tenures as discussed with SW at the outset of the research. However, it will be noted that a significant proportion (two thirds) have worked for SW or its acquired companies for more than 5 years. This means that they have experienced and survived the (extended) period of lean transformation that has been the characteristic of SW over the past seven years.

The survey asked managers to respond on both their own level of organizational commitment and their direct reports' level of OCBs. Table 4 summarizes both the sample responses as a whole, and a breakdown between those managers from branch and head office locations. In all cases the construct value was computed as a mean average of the respondent's answer to the relevant questions.

Construct (Likert scale – range of responses in brackets)	Mean Scores (n=38)	Standard Deviation (n=38)	Branch Mean (n=20)	Head Office Mean (n=18)
Manager's OC (7)	6.31	0.820	6.66	5.92
OCB Helping (5)	4.32	0.520	4.31	4.34
OCB Improving (5)	3.99	0.612	4.14	3.82
OCB Involved with Organization (5)	3.48	0.600	3.64	3.30
OCB Involved with Coworkers (5)	3.59	0.740	3.54	3.64
OCB Well being (5)	4.07	0.592	4.09	4.04

Table 4. Manager ratings of own OC and team's OCBs

The self-rated scoring for managers' own OC (a 7 point scale, from Not at all to Completely) confirms the interview observations and suggests that this sample is highly committed. Although the Head Office based managers showed a lower mean score than that for the Branch based managers, both are within half a standard deviation of the sample mean.

Similarly the scores for each of the five OCB components in Table 4 are comparable for Branch and Head Office manager ratings of their teams. In no case does the Branch or Head Office sub sample deviate even half a standard deviation from the sample mean. As remarked earlier, the managers' interview responses mostly focused their examples of OCBs on the first two categories of OCB. In their survey results, they score the task related OCBs (Helping others and Suggesting improvements) at 4 or above out of 5. Two of the remaining OCBs (Involvement with organization and with co-workers) score around 3.5 out of 5. Only the positive score for Well-being is out of line with the interview results, being comparable with the task related OCBs.

It is also worth noting that while previous studies have mostly used measurement tools developed in the 1990's or earlier, when they have used manager ratings combined with 5 point scales, outcomes have reflected similar mean scores for OCBs e.g. (Shore et al. 1995; Kuvaas & Dysvik 2010; Nielsen et al. 2012) with a range of 3.28 to 4.07.

5.3. Employee survey

105 of the 197 direct reports (53%) responded to their survey. Table 5 summarizes the background details of the respondents. Of note is the split between branch and head office (roughly 2:3), whereas the split among managers was approximately 1:1. This reflects a tendency for larger reporting spans among head office managers.

As with the manager sample it is notable that a large proportion of direct reports (in this case 56%) have over 5 years service with SW. In contrast tenure with their current manager is low (a quarter lower than 12 months, and nearly half between 1 and 3 years). This reflects higher turnover rates in managerial positions.

Question	Response (n=105)	Nos.	%	Question	Response (n=105)	Nos.	%
Location	Branch	44	41.9%	Tenure with organization	< 12 months	10	9.5%
	Head Office	61	58.1%		1 - 3 years	22	21.0%
Gender	Male	49	46.7%		3 - 5 years	10	9.5%
	Female	51	48.6%		> 5 years	59	56.2%

	no response	5	4.8%		no response	4	3.8%
Age	Less than 25 years	3	2.9%	Tenure with current manager	< 12 months	27	25.7%
	26 - 35 years	23	21.9%		1 - 3 years	48	45.7%
	36 - 45 years	29	27.6%		3 - 5 years	10	9.5%
	46 - 55 years	27	25.7%		> 5 years	16	15.2%
	56 years or more	17	16.2%		no response	4	3.8%
	no response	6	5.7%	Work Area	Accountancy, finance & admin.	39	37.1%
					Customer services	9	8.6%
					Marketing & Sales	24	22.9%
					Operations	29	27.6%
					no response	4	3.8%

Table 5. Employee survey characteristics

The employee survey included questions on two constructs (POS and LMX), in addition to those in the manager survey on both OC and OCBs. A summary of the mean averages together with the other constructs is shown in Table 6. Two features stand out. Firstly, in relation to the five types of OCB there is a negligible difference between self-rating and managers rating of their teams (managers scores are repeated in the final column to enable comparison). This is at variance with previous findings that manager ratings of subordinate OCBs is likely more accurate and lower than those from self-rating (Meyer et al. 2002). This is unlikely to be due to the employee sample that responded being less inclined to OCBs than the non-respondents (responding voluntarily to surveys is itself an example of an OCB).

Construct (Likert scale – range of responses in brackets)	Mean Scores (n=105)	Standard Deviation (n=105)	Branch Mean (n=44)	Head Office Mean (n=61)	Manager Ratings (n=38)
Perceived OS (7)	3.67	.692	3.58	3.73	-
Leader MX (7)	2.91	1.325	2.87	2.93	-
Employee's OC (7)	6.08	.885	6.10	6.07	6.31*
OCB Helping (5)	4.34	.523	4.38	4.30	4.32
OCB Improving (5)	3.71	.779	3.74	3.69	3.99
OCB Involved with Org (5)	3.19	.715	3.16	3.22	3.48
OCB Involved with Coworkers (5)	3.48	.932	3.36	3.57	3.59
OCB Well being (5)	4.03	.805	4.10	3.98	4.07

Table 6. Employee ratings of POS, LMX, OC and OCBs

**Manager's rating is of their own OC not their direct reports*

Secondly, and more surprising, is that the employee scores for both POS and LMX are relatively low and are around or below their midpoint (a 7 point scale is used) and with wide standard deviations ($\mu = 3.67$, $\sigma = 0.692$ and $\mu = 2.91$, $\sigma = 1.325$ respectively). This signifies that respondents on average moderately disagreed with the statements associated with the two constructs and suggests that in this sample at least, employees perceive little support from either their managers or the organization. Nevertheless both the self-rating scores for OC and for the five categories of OCBs are comparatively high (i.e. respondents very much agree and quite a bit agree, respectively) and (in the case of OCBs) consistent with those ratings of the manager survey. This is also at variance with most previous research findings. This throws into question the application of previous theory which proposes that employee POS will result in OC and

LMX will result in Supervisor Commitment and these in turn will result in OCB's (as summarized in Fig 2 in Section 4.1.).

Given the high reported levels for both OC and OCBs and the low levels for POS and LMX in this sample, it is worth examining the correlation matrix for POS and LMX on the one hand, and OC and OCBs on the other. These are shown in Table 7 overleaf. The correlations between POS and LMX with both OC and each of the five types of OCB (see columns 1 and 2) are negative rather than positive, and the majority of them are significant at either the 5% or 1% level. This further suggests that if these employees are highly committed and show strong incidence of OCBs (the latter point confirmed in both surveys and interviews by their managers), then it is unlikely due to either their perceptions of the organization or their managers. In this sample it would appear to be in spite of such perceptions.

There are at least two candidates for an explanation of such results. First, it is possible that the employees have an affective attachment or commitment (engagement) to some third target and this in turn fuels the drive to OCBs. The most likely candidates would be their co-workers. Both during the interviews with the managers and through direct observation at the different sites, it was apparent that there exists a strong camaraderie within SW. Managers offered examples of co-workers supporting colleagues post domestic trauma, and sociable chatter and joking were frequently observed.

Variables	Mean	Stand Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Perceived Org Support	3.67	0.692								
2. Leader Member Exchange	2.91	1.325	.353**							
3. Employee's OC	6.08	0.885	-.432**	-.057						
4. OCB Helping others	4.34	0.523	-.011	-.073	.372**					
5. OCB Improving	3.71	0.779	-.118	-.058	.397**	.501**				
6. OCB Involved with Organization	3.19	0.715	-.404**	-.417**	.473**	.235*	.334**			
7. OCB Involved with Coworkers	3.48	0.932	-.217*	-.258*	.152	.272**	.232*	.362**		
8. OCB Wellbeing	4.03	0.805	-.253*	-.271**	.401**	.507**	.462**	.447**	.598*	

Table 7. Means, standard deviations and correlations of employee variables n = 105

Variables 1,2,3 on 7 point scale; variables 4,5,6,7,8 on 5 point scale * $\rho < 0.05$ and ** $\rho < 0.01$

Secondly, it is possible that something other than affective attachment is driving the engagement. At least one author has considered this possibility (Bolino 1999). Rather than assuming selfless good intentions alone on the part of those exhibiting OCBs, he posits another mechanism based on impression management motivation. This seems quite a plausible rationale and was specifically acknowledged by Organ as a process deserving separate investigation (Organ et al., 2006). Given SW's context of more than 5 years of a 'lean transformation' and regular staff reductions the absence of perceived support is easily understandable.

5.4. What do the results say about the middle manager role?

There is an inconsistency between the employee survey and manager interview results in that the managers consider that they were personally more likely responsible for their direct reports' levels of OC and OCBs than the organization. The survey results suggest that if there is any influence it is negative, and that in any event LMX levels are lower even than POS levels. The results of the survey also conflict with some academic research. For example Wayne et al. showed higher correlations for POS than LMX with altruism OCB in their study (Ibid). Here the employee survey demonstrated the reverse.

Another consideration is the tenure with both the current manager and the manager's manager. Tables 3 and 5 show respectively that nearly 45% of managers have less than 12 months tenure with their manager and 25% of employees have less than 12 months tenure with their manager. This combination and the large proportions in the 1-3 year category reflect the regular and continuing turnover in managers (both senior and middle) at SW. This is a factor raised in several of the interviews with managers as a negative point. In this context it is unclear whether or not what the managers claim to be doing (from their interviews) is what they are doing and if so, what influence it may be having. At minimum it seems clear that the managers' actions are not the prime factor in the observed high levels of OC and OCBs in their direct reports.

6. Discussion

This research sought to throw light on the question of middle managers' role, if any, in influencing the levels of OC and OCB's in their direct reports, by using mixed methods in a single organization (semi structured paired, and one to one interviews with managers, together with surveys of both the managers and their direct reports).

The results suggest that the managers both look for signs of OC and OCBs, and attempt to encourage and manage the levels in their teams (RQ1). Techniques used that treat employees individually rather than as a group include seeking to understand individuals' current situations and to raise levels by offering challenges for both interest and development e.g. by allocating staff to special projects, involving staff in problem resolution, providing appropriate recognition and rewards. Techniques that treat employees as a work group or groups include fostering a good climate e.g. responding quickly to emerging issues and an 'open door', encouraging or supporting initiatives for social gatherings, and ensuring provision of a 'big picture' view of the organization to provide context for individual's own contributions. Together these techniques expand our understanding of how middle managers seek to influence OC and OCBs.

However, the second research question explored not only how the managers influenced their teams, but also addressed the route to OC and OCBs. The survey results broadly suggest that although they try, the managers are ineffective in influencing these outcomes in their staff. The relevant correlation coefficients in Table 7 are negative. This research was in part based on an assumption (following the literature) that two pathways (via POS and PSS, see Figure 2) lead to higher levels of OC and OCBs. In this organization and within this sample, these models do not appear to hold. Although their direct reports demonstrate high levels of both OC and OCBs, they report low levels of support from either the organization or their direct managers.

Before discussing possible explanations for this discrepancy, it is worth questioning any limitations of the research and the likely accuracy of the findings. First, the organization was asked to provide the sample of managers, but apart from limiting their selection to one region of North America (comprising both branches and departments in head office with no direct

influence on strategy or HR policies), there were no apparent restrictions that might have led to bias. The sample of direct reports was a consequence of the managerial sample. The design was cross sectional and limited to the one organization, but this was deliberate to control for organizational differences (e.g. of culture, HR policies etc.). On the face of it there is no reason to suppose that those included would have been unrepresentative of the population.

Without challenging the validity of models that rely on POS and PSS as antecedents of OC and OCBs, it is possible (and even likely) that in the context of SW other pathway(s) are more plausible. Scholars of OC have long known that other targets for employee attachment are also present. It is unclear in the literature whether or not similar or different mechanisms underlie these other attachments, and if the components are independent or in some way additive (Klein et al., 2009, Chapters 4 and 5). It has also been established that ‘survivors’ remaining after major reorganizations can respond by increasing reliance on relationships with their work groups see for example (Doherty et al. 1996). This suggests that the staff in SW, in response to repeated downsizing, may have strengthened their attachment to their co-workers, thereby explaining their high levels of engagement and OCBs, in particular the focus on helping those around them. On the other hand this would not necessarily explain their relatively high levels of OC.

A more persuasive line of explanation is the possibility of staff providing high levels of engagement and OCBs in order to sustain their employment prospects against (presumed) further reorganizations in SW’s lean transformation. This alternative mechanism via ‘impression management’ was first proposed some 15 years ago (Bolino 1999). He pointed to empirical evidence that the relationship should be explored (Wayne & Green, 1993, cited in (Bolino 1999, p.85)). He further proposed that different types of impression management could be differentially associated with different types of OCB. For example, he suggested that altruism OCBs might be more effective in organizations placing high value on cooperation, and that the timing of any type of OCB to when it is most critical would be more advantageous to the individual. In consequence it seems necessary that a third pathway should be added to the currently assumed pathways to commitment and thence to OCBs – one via the employee’s impression management that requires little if any perception of the manager or organization caring for him or her. This would then provide some explanation of the data observed in the current research.

While this research project has been limited to a single organization that may represent an outlier, the context of repeated and continuing change and restructuring is not unusual. Indeed the findings in the author’s P2 project, while not including separate surveys and measurement of POS and LMX, would be consistent with the proposed inclusion of impression management in that managers in that sample did mention it. Future research could usefully examine the levels of POS and LMX in settings showing both high OC and OCBs. It would also be valuable to ascertain whether or not there are signs of impression management in such organizations.

Turning to the third RQ (manager focus on OCBs most related to task performance) the data suggests that this is the case amongst middle managers in SW, both in respect to the techniques they employ to encourage engagement and OCBs, and in their examples of engagement and disengagement. This behaviour may in turn focus employees on OCBs that contribute to the performance indicators e.g. in helping others with their workloads, and in anticipating (and avoiding) problems that impact service or delivery levels. Nevertheless, both managers and employees alike reported high levels of OCBs across all five categories in their survey responses. If so, then the earlier observation remains true, this can hardly be explained by social exchange theory and impression management will also need to be considered.

The prime contribution of this research is first to extend our understanding of the role of the middle manager in influencing the levels of OC and OCBs in their direct reports. It also reinforces the importance of context where phenomena are socially constructed, and specifically argues for the incorporation of an alternative pathway (including impression management) to the existing models for the development of OC and OCBs. This in turn may necessitate the integration of pathways relying primarily on social exchange theory with those that rely on more transactional relationships.

The research also contributes to practice in other organizations that, like SW, experience prolonged periods of 'transformation' and 'downsizing', highlighting the need for managers to deal individually with their direct reports in both fostering the desired levels of engagement and citizenship and seeking to deliver their performance targets.

Finally the research shows the benefits of using both mixed methods (without which the inconsistency with existing models would not have been observed) and paired depth interviews to improve the richness of the interview data.

7. Appendices

7.1. Manager survey

P3 2014 Engagement & Citizenship

Introduction

This survey is part of a research project exploring how engagement and individual 'citizenship' (meaning various discretionary behaviors, like helping a colleague) vary across organizations. Your participation will be really helpful in identifying the sort of things that organizations (and managers) can do to encourage both engagement and citizenship. Individual responses will only be available to the researcher (Clive Landa) who, as explained in your invitation, is based in Philadelphia and completing a doctorate at Cranfield University School of Management in the UK.

The overall survey results will be discussed with your company, so that they can be aware of existing good practices and any suggestions for improvement. A summary of the findings will also be made available to all participants in the survey. I do hope you will agree to participate and that you will also be willing to take part in a face to face interview with me (being arranged separately for a mutually convenient time). This survey should not take more than 15 – 20 minutes to complete. Thank you. Clive

If you wish to contact me or offer any additional comments, please feel free to e mail me at clive.landa@cranfield.ac.uk

About You

This section asks a few questions about you so that the results can be compared with such items as length of service, age etc. As explained in your invitation only the researcher will have access to the individual survey responses. He will use them to identify the results for differing teams and for differing locations and only general conclusions will be shared with the organization.

What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female

What is your age?

☐ Less than 25 years ☐ 26 - 35 years ☐ 36 - 45 years ☐ 46 - 55 years ☐ 56 years or more

a) How long have you worked for the organization and b) how long have you worked for your current manager?

Worked for the organization (please select a time period)	<input type="radio"/> Less than 12 months	<input type="radio"/> 1 - 3 years	<input type="radio"/> 3 - 5 years	<input type="radio"/> More than 5 years
Worked for my current manager (please select a time period)	<input type="radio"/> Less than 12 months	<input type="radio"/> 1 - 3 years	<input type="radio"/> 3 - 5 years	<input type="radio"/> More than 5 years

How would you best describe your main type of work?

- ☐ Accounting, finance and administration
- ☐ Customer services
- ☐ Marketing and sales
- ☐ Operations
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

About the Organization

This section seeks your views on working for the organization.

Please select the answer that best reflects your view of each of the following statements.

	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Mostly	Very	Completely
I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help the organization be successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How committed are you to this organization?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent do you care about this organization?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How dedicated are you to this organization?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent have you chosen to be committed to this organization?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

'Citizenship' and discretionary activities

This final section of the survey seeks your views on different types of discretionary activity that have been observed in the workplace and the extent to which you have observed any of them in your team/ direct reports. Thinking specifically about your direct reports, to what extent have you observed them engage in any of the following activities?

Helping others

	Not At All	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very often
Helping others who have heavy workloads.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Willingly helping others solve work-related problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Always ready to lend a helping hand to those around them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trying to prevent problems for coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Considering the impact of their actions on coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating with others before initiating actions that might affect them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Suggesting improvements

	Not At All	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very often
Making creative suggestions to coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voicing opinions about work-related issues even if others disagree.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making constructive suggestions to improve processes for getting work done.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging others in the group to voice their opinions regarding issues that affect the group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Involvement with the organization		Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very often
Involvement with the organization	Attending events that are not required, but help the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Attending meetings that are not mandatory, but are considered important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Keeping up with organizational news (e.g., organization-wide announcements, organizational changes, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Taking part in organization-sponsored knowledge-sharing opportunities (e.g. talks, training courses).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Volunteering for special projects in addition to their core job tasks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involvement with coworkers		Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very often
Involvement with coworkers	Getting to know their coworkers on a personal basis.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Celebrating coworkers' life events (e.g. birthdays, weddings).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Participating in informal social activities with coworkers during the workday.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Being sociable in workplace interactions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improving general well-being		Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very often
Improving general well-being	Making others feel comfortable "being themselves" at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Expressing their own authentic personality at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Supporting others' efforts to make their personal health and well-being a priority.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Praising others when they are successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any additional comments

Thank you very much for sharing your views and assisting with this survey.

It may be that some other thoughts have occurred to you in the course of the survey.

If so, and you would like to enter some comments please use the box below. And again many thanks for your help. I hope that I may see you at one of the up-coming interviews.

Please feel free to add any additional thoughts you may have at this time. Or, if you prefer, you can e mail me directly at clive.landa@cranfield.ac.uk

7.2. Employee survey

P3 2014 Engagement

Introduction

This survey is part of a research project exploring how engagement and individual 'citizenship' (meaning various discretionary behaviors, like helping a colleague) vary across organizations. Your participation will be really helpful in identifying the sort of things that organizations (and managers) can do to encourage both engagement and citizenship. Individual responses will only be available to the researcher (Clive Landa) who, as explained in your invitation, is based in Philadelphia and completing a doctorate at Cranfield University School of Management in the UK.

The overall survey results will be discussed with your company, so that they can be aware of existing good practices and any suggestions for improvement. A summary of the findings will also be made available to all participants in the survey. This survey should not take more than 15 – 20 minutes to complete. Thank you. Clive

If you wish to contact me or offer any additional comments, please feel free to e mail me at clive.landa@cranfield.ac.uk

About You

This section asks a few questions about you so that the results can be compared with such items as length of service, age etc. As explained in your invitation only the researcher will have access to the individual survey responses. He will use them to identify the results for differing teams and for differing locations and only general conclusions will be shared with the organization.

What is your gender?
☐ Male ☐ Female

What is your age?
Less than 25 years ☐ 26 - 35 years ☐ 36 - 45 years ☐ 46 - 55 years ☐ 56 years or more ☐

a) How long have you worked for the organization and b) how long have you worked for your current manager?

Worked for the organization (please select a time period)	<input type="radio"/> Less than 12 months	<input type="radio"/> 1 - 3 years	<input type="radio"/> 3 - 5 years	<input type="radio"/> More than 5 years
Worked for my current manager (please select a time period)	<input type="radio"/> Less than 12 months	<input type="radio"/> 1 - 3 years	<input type="radio"/> 3 - 5 years	<input type="radio"/> More than 5 years

How would you best describe your main type of work?

- ☐ Accounting, finance and administration
- ☐ Customer services
- ☐ Marketing and sales
- ☐ Operations
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Working for the Organization

This section seeks your views on how the organization treats employees like you. Please select the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The organization shows very little concern for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organization really cares about my well-being.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organization strongly considers my goals and values.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organization cares about my opinions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organization is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help is available from the organization when I have a problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Working for your Manager

This section seeks your views on how your current manager treats employees like you.

Please select the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I usually know where I stand with my manager.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My manager has enough confidence in me that he/she would defend and justify my decisions if I was not present to do so.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My working relationship with my manager is effective.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My manager understands my problems and needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can count on my manager to "bail me out" even at his or her own expense, when I really need it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My manager recognizes my potential.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regardless of how much power my manager has built into his or her position, my manager would be personally inclined to use his/her power to help me solve problems in my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

About the Organization

This section seeks your views on working for the organization.

Please select the answer that best reflects your view of each of the following statements.

	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Mostly	Very	Completely
I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help the organization be successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How committed are you to this organization?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent do you care about this organization?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How dedicated are you to this organization?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent have you chosen to be committed to this organization?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

'Citizenship' and discretionary activities

This final section of the survey seeks your views on different types of discretionary activity that have been observed in the workplace and the extent to which you have personally participated in any of them in your organization. Please enter your answers for each of the statements in the following 5 groups.
Helping others.

	Not At All	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very often
Helping others who have heavy workloads.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Willingly helping others solve work-related problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Always ready to lend a helping hand to those around them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trying to prevent problems for coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Considering the impact of their actions on coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating with others before initiating actions that might affect them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Suggesting improvements.

	Not At All	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very often
Making creative suggestions to coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voicing opinions about work-related issues even if others disagree.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making constructive suggestions to improve processes for getting work done.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging others in the group to voice their opinions regarding issues that affect the group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Involvement with the organization

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very often
Attending events that are not required, but help the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending meetings that are not mandatory, but are considered important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keeping up with organizational news (e.g., organization-wide announcements, organizational changes, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking part in organization-sponsored knowledge-sharing opportunities (e.g. talks, training courses).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteering for special projects in addition to their core job tasks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Involvement with coworkers

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very often
Getting to know their coworkers on a personal basis.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Celebrating coworkers' life events (e.g. birthdays, weddings).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participating in informal social activities with coworkers during the workday.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being sociable in workplace interactions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15 Improving general well-being.

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very often
Making others feel comfortable "being themselves" at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expressing their own authentic personality at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting others' efforts to make their personal health and well-being a priority.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Praising others when they are successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any additional comments

Thank you very much for sharing your views and assisting with this survey.

It may be that some other thoughts have occurred to you in the course of the survey.

If so, and you would like to enter some comments please use the box below. And again many thanks for your help.

Please feel free to add any additional thoughts you may have at this time. Or, if you prefer, you can e mail me directly at clive.landa@cranfield.ac.uk

7.3.Invitation to participate in research

The text below is shown with the term ‘engagement’ highlighted (refers to OC)

“Dear Invitee:

This note invites you to participate in research that I am doing within [SW] over the next month or so. I hope it persuades you to complete a short online survey. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. Thanks in advance for your help.

Background:

My early working career was spent in the UK, but I have lived and worked in Philadelphia for the last 10 years. Having spent more than 40 years working in a variety of very different organizations, I am currently researching engagement. Although quite a bit is already known, there has been relatively little investigation on one of the key links in the engagement chain, namely the relationship between employees and their direct manager or supervisor. This project aims to remedy this.

Design:

[SW] agreed that I may approach a sample of around 40 managers, half from branches in the Eastern region and half from head office in Baltimore. Both the sample managers and their direct reports are invited to complete an online survey. This collects some details like age, gender and length of service that are known to have some impact on engagement. Other questions will ask for your views on how the organization and managers operate, together with views on the degree to which individuals volunteer extra efforts (academics refer to this as ‘citizenship behaviors’). All the data is strictly confidential and will only be seen and analysed by me. Any general patterns observed will be reported at the end of the project to both the company and respondents to the survey. The sample managers will also be invited to face-to-face interviews. These will focus on how managers may influence engagement levels. Again participation will be voluntary and all comments treated in strict confidence.

Potential benefits:

[SW] will discover whether or not some parts of the organization experience higher engagement levels than others. And if so, they may also find out some management practices are better than others at eliciting engagement and citizenship behavior. More widely, in addition to contributing to my research degree, the findings should throw some light on how managers ‘manage’ engagement.

Participation:

If you are happy to participate please link to the survey at [web address]. You have until May 31st to complete the survey. Thank you again for your help.”

7.4. Manager interview protocol

Protocol for P3 interviews:

Mixture of paired depth interviews (where participants of similar rank) and one on one interviews: aim at roughly equal weight per section, allow overrun up to 5 minutes on main two sections. Note all participants will have completed survey i.e. themes are pre-flagged as of interest.

- **Opening** (5 – 10 minutes)
 - Greeting, introductions, thanks for sparing time etc. + *complete release form*
 - Purpose to explore managers' view(s) of their direct reports' **engagement** to the organization and 'citizenship behaviours'
 - "I'll record interview" (so maximum attention to your views) – "results only for use by me, any comments used anonymous." "Can we begin by you telling me a little bit about yourself *so that I can check the recorder is working*"
 - "Overall should not take more than an hour. Hope that's OK. *Any questions*"
- **Engagement** (15 – 20 minutes)
 - "I think of **engagement** as a positive feeling by the employee for the organization, some sort of attachment". [Also make clear that it is the manager's views regarding the attachment of their direct reports that is the subject of interviews]
 - "What does **engagement** mean for you as a manager? How would you describe it?" [Continue using their 'label' if different]
 - "What if anything, do you associate with **engagement**? Do people behave differently, if so, how"
- **Citizenship behaviours** (15 – 20 minutes)
 - "I think of citizenship behaviours as examples of additional assistance or some sort of support by employees. They tend to be voluntary and not necessarily a part of their job descriptions"
 - "Do you ever observe examples of your staff with citizenship behaviours and, if so, can you give me one or two examples?"
 - Of examples, "what did you feel were the reasons for such behaviours?"
 - "Do you make any attempt to encourage such behaviours? If so, how?"
 - "Do you notice any comments about citizenship behaviours from others e.g. co-workers or other managers?"
- **Conclusion** (10 – 15 minutes)
 - Pick up on any perceived confusions, clarify their meanings
 - "That was really helpful, and I greatly appreciate your sparing the time"
 - "If you get to think of something else over the next week or so, please feel free to e mail me with your comments" reiterate intention to produce a summary of findings for their use within next month or so.
 - [Apologies if there has been an overrun on the 60 minutes]

7.5. Manager interview verbatim comments (plus example of coding of text)

F: "I think that the huge part that made them [a previous employer] or what really made them successful was the communications. It came from the top-down, if anything I almost think there were too many communications. Like everyday there were just general communications about the organization, what was going on and then what was going on in certain groups. So there was a lot of communication, but here...

I don't think we have that, I don't think that we have that same level of communication that would draw people in to understand what's happening around them. My group has got very in tune with what they need to know, they work a lot with IT, they work with the people they need to work with but I don't think that we do a good job of letting people know what's going on in the organization. Like we said, okay, we are going to do an IPO sometime and nobody is really...last year we were talking about this and we had a change in management. Well, we really haven't communicated to people since then and so I'll occasionally hear people say so, are we still doing this IPO, or you know, and that's a big deal and that's something that probably people should be kept up to date on you know, what's our timeline, what are people doing to make this happen. And I don't think that we do a good job as an organization communicating down and keeping people engaged at an organization level.

M: You sit on the quarterly...you sit in on the quarterly reviews?

F: Yeah.

M: I think there's a level where it comes down to the quarterly reviews so the CEO and CFO talk and they give us a little bit...I quite like them because they give you a bit of a global view. And I suppose it's really up to us as managers to probably filter that down. But it could also come from the director, we get to see an email at least once a week from him telling us about something because that information gets fed to us quarterly to a degree. But other than that, it stops there. There's no sort of communication to everybody, it's rare, maybe just a change in the...CFO change, so everybody knew about that or the... that was it and that would have been a global email because otherwise we get very little. HR are very good on Wednesdays, they do their Wednesdays thing, but don't communicate what's going on. But I also find working in the UK being a microcosm of this company, 70 sites in this...smaller than one of your states here...

F: 70 sites?

M: Yeah, it used to be...I had it up to 80 once, down to less than 50 now they consolidated and restructured. But with the expansion and growth, we acquired five companies in six months, and I had all these extra sites I had to deal with. But I used to always spend time, because I had the time to actually go and meet with Scottish managers, directors and go round, and they work in these little isolated pockets, they work B to B locally B to B. This is a more of a branch perspective rather than in head office. And that is their area; that is their environment. They know everything about that environment they work in, and they get someone from head office here, and they want to tell you their world and they also want to hear what's going on. And that is...you need to get...head office needs to communicate out to everybody and make sure that everybody feels they are not just in a small pocket. They are a part of a big engaged team that's globally making this revenue and this profit for this company. So...but you do find because we are little satellites, I think there's an element of just a little microcosm that haven't a clue what's going on in the wider picture. I'm not sure how it would help with engagement but I think if you knew part of the bigger company and you were fed more information would that broaden people's view, I don't know, and help them understand more? I'm not sure.

Communication – Big picture Engagement Mgt – Explaining communications and changes
Engagement Mgt – Individual observation, relationships and caring Issues - Communication

Nodes	Selected quotes
Engagement Signs: Visual Vocal	<i>"I look at their facial features when I come in and I address them to see whether one maybe sick, one might be tired I take it all in verbally and auditorily"</i> <i>"I listen to them on the phone with the customer, I do a lot of listening"</i>
Engagement Signs: Energy Enthusiasm	<i>"I look to see that they are busy"</i> <i>"Somebody who's got pep in their step when they are out there, and not just moping around."</i> <i>"... they take on an attitude where it's more personal to them, and when it becomes personal, then they strive to do a better job"</i> <i>"...they have a higher energy level"</i> <i>"There's enthusiasm, they enjoy what they do and in general, they get along with their peers."</i>
Engagement Signs: Humour	<i>"I don't mind seeing or hearing joking, banter back and forth, as long as it's a positive thing, I think that helps the engagement of the total group."</i>
Engagement Signs: Initiative Ideas	<i>"...every job has issues, some people will complain about the problem, some people come and offer solutions for the problems"</i>
Engagement Signs: Helpful over & above	<i>"... what we try to look for as a manager is always try to look for the people that want to go above and beyond"</i> <i>"The people that really are engaged and buy into it are the folks that you don't even have to ask to stay and work overtime when we need to, they understand it and they are here for the team"</i>
Engagement Signs: Pride in work	<i>"...the team feels very conscientious just about the quality that goes out"</i> <i>"It's the people who take pride in their work"</i> <i>"...they obviously take a lot of pride in the work that they do, so they want to make sure that everything is accurate at all times"</i>
Engagement signs: Seeking learning	<i>"... you see people that are always asking to learn new things; that's a good sign"</i> <i>"I have a person in my team who has taken it upon herself to learn how to use a system, coming with no knowledge of how to use the system, learn how to ... troubleshoot it ... to ask the questions when she needs the help ... This was not even expected of her"</i>
Engagement Signs: Anticipation	<i>"So they are looking at the whole picture and they don't want to have to rework it, like if they realize after the fact that something went wrong and have to do rework they don't want that"</i> <i>"... if they are engaged they're understanding the big picture and making sure that what they're doing is going to accomplish the ultimate goal, not the request that was asked."</i> <i>"... that person that calls them back or sends an email just to say, hey you know it's been two days is this issue completely resolved or are you still having issues with it?"</i>
Engagement Management: Observation, relationships	<i>"...when I see them during the day always addressing my staff, greeting them in a positive way, being excited about what they're doing if they share it with me"</i> <i>"I think you have to study people and just realize what motivates that person"</i>
Engagement Management: Encourage initiative, owning	<i>"[Co-interviewee] and I both, we try to foster interaction, and foster and empower that type of commitment level from the employees"</i> <i>"the employee has an idea, an improvement idea you know, you engage them to do the work and as quickly as you possibly you can try to get that particular idea implemented"</i> <i>"So one of the things that [X] really did really well, it was if you have a problem, don't bring me a problem, bring me a problem and a solution, so he really engages people of different thinking."</i> <i>"... if I give somebody very interesting project maybe a project that was, a project that I thought was going to be significant challenge for you to you know accomplish, I think that would help your level of engagement"</i>

Engagement Management: Personal development	<p><i>"I talked to her about developing her job, giving her more responsibilities"</i></p> <p><i>"If you expect more from people, and you give them the parameters in which to work in, and you give them an opportunity to make decisions and kind of control their little world, I think you can raise that level of engagement because I've seen it happen here"</i></p>
Engagement Management: Fostering 'fun' climate	<p><i>... we've been trying to do these team building kind of things and my team loves to eat and so three months ago we did a cookie baking contest"</i></p> <p><i>"We speak to them as human beings, we try to have a little fun, we try to keep things kind of light to some degree, but also we are focused on the end results"</i></p> <p><i>"I think it's also important to take time every once in a while to have some kind of bonding activities with the guys."</i></p>
Engagement Management: Respect, recognition and Rewards	<p><i>"It's all in how you manage your people and value your people, and they will, they will bend over backwards for you" [co-interviewee] "Yes, you have to value them; if they are having issues you have to also work with them on the same aspect. It cannot be a one-way street"</i></p> <p><i>"I treat them with as much respect as I possibly can, expect in return and work with them as much as I can to get what I need."</i></p> <p><i>"... you try positive reinforcement in front of the group, so that the ones who are less engaged see that gee so and so is getting some recognition for the work that they've done"</i></p> <p><i>"...so they're way more engaged and they went above and beyond in their scope of work and you reward them with a [X] award."</i></p> <p><i>"Employees, anybody has to be rewarded everybody likes to say good job, thanks for coming to work today, I think that makes a big difference in an organization"</i></p> <p><i>"so when they have an executive, or you know a member of upper management, engages with them and know who they are that is, is exciting to them"</i></p>
Engagement Management: Pick up 'issues' quickly	<p><i>"but I also try to absorb some of that, you know, when an employee has issues that are occurring or field stress, you know, may feel overwhelmed, I try to step in and help out with that and try to absorb some of that stress myself"</i></p> <p><i>"I think proactivity you know, dealing with an issue upfront and head on"</i></p>
Engagement Management: Explain communications	<p><i>"I try to be a filter to whatever pressures that I am receiving, I try not to emanate those down, you know the old saying, you know, [X] flows down river. But I try to filter as much as I can, doesn't always happen."</i></p> <p><i>"... how you manage that, to the extent that you can with regards to make them feel comfortable or at ease explaining what the...reasons for these things are, whether it's a branch closing, workforce production etc."</i></p> <p><i>"I try to be more pro-active so if there is something happening in the organization then I can share with them, whether it's good, bad or, indifferent I will and I think that causes their uncertainty to be more balanced, and their trust with me as a manager."</i></p>
Engagement Management: Set good example, open door	<p><i>"Don't ask, don't make people stay late unless you're here with them"</i></p> <p><i>"I've tried to live with a degree of energy and positive attitude, not a negative attitude... I try to lead by example"</i></p> <p><i>"I don't pry too much into their personal lives, but I'm involved in that. I always tell them my door is always open if you ever need to talk about anything, if it has nothing to do work, you just want to get something off your chest or talk about something, just come and talk to me."</i></p>
Engagement Causes and beliefs	<p><i>"I think we have a big play in it, I think it's our job to encourage that"</i></p> <p><i>"I believe it's people who can adapt to change that stay with this company. Some people can't just take change and it's always changing."</i></p> <p><i>"If you can't make a difference in your job then, you know you wake up in the morning you don't want to go to work, it's just another day, you got to be able to make a difference"</i></p>

Targets of Engagement	<p><i>"I can say they are engaged, they are committed to the company, the branch and me, and it makes life nice"</i></p> <p><i>"I think people's engagement is more of what they can feel and touch and see and they come in contact with on a regular basis"</i></p> <p><i>"I really don't think it's their perception of the organization that is a result of the way they work quite honestly... the morale for the employees comes from us as the managers, not really from the company."</i></p> <p><i>"I think one of the biggest things that would hold any of them back from wearing the company jacket would be the amount of layoffs that we've had throughout that's since 2008"</i></p> <p><i>"... you could be building on a [X] anywhere and you'd have that same level of excitement, that you are part of bringing this up, so I don't think its [SW]"</i></p> <p><i>"I don't think that they are seeing the loyalty from the company, but I think they see the loyalty among the co-workers."</i></p>
Variation in levels of Engagement	<p><i>"one of the things I try to do is really close that gap as much as possible. You always have the difference from your top guy to your bottom guy obviously, but I think getting everybody kind of closer to the same page a lot of it is ... after the work is done, the project is done whatever is recognizing those people for what they have done publicly"</i></p> <p><i>"the guys that are on the higher end a lot of times will go out and start these projects and process changes on their own and I encourage that. The guys on the lower end I'll try to stay more involved in what they are doing"</i></p>
Citizenship Signs: Helping others	<p><i>"if one sees that another is not having the time to accomplish it, they will step in and say can I help out"</i></p> <p><i>"... we all have our own chore to do at the end of the day basically, and if someone's not here that day and you see somebody take care of that other guy's chore for them, since they weren't here"</i></p> <p><i>"it's more or less volunteering to learn, learn something new or take on something new"</i></p> <p><i>"we've had two folks that have had serious illness and the rest of the group rallied to help out because they've been out a lot"</i></p>
Citizenship Signs: Suggesting improvements	<p><i>"... if anybody comes up with those kind of... with certain ideas I always entertain them"</i></p> <p><i>"maybe the company will send like something out and it will spark something and it will come to me and say maybe it can be done better this way"</i></p> <p><i>"it's not only looking for improvement, but also a learning experience"</i></p> <p><i>"sometimes that person will come up with a, maybe their own way of doing something or a shortcut"</i></p>
Citizenship Signs: Involvement with organization	<p><i>"a specific example, when we moved from our own corporate location... I had an employee actually volunteer to basically coordinate it"</i></p>
Citizenship Signs: Involvement with Co-workers	<p><i>"we've had two folks that have had serious illness and the rest of the group rallied to help out because they've been out a lot... I didn't have to say did anybody check on these two folks work while they were out of the office"</i></p>
Citizenship Signs: Well being	<p><i>"it is critical to engage the rest of the team that is here ... that is present, during the week that this person is out, to jump in and assist ... not only is that critical for that team member to come back and find that work at a level that they can jump in and pick up on ..."</i></p>
Citizenship management: Raise expectations, explain	<p><i>"I talk about how important it is if we're going to succeed."</i></p> <p><i>"I think it's very important if they are not part of the company then they are not going to see why, why would I do this, why I'm I going the extra step, what is in it for me? If they don't see what is in it for them they are not going to do it"</i></p>
Citizenship management: OK to go over and above	<p><i>"... the tool or the technique that I use is you know, this is your job, it's not just these boundaries, it will go beyond these boundaries, you have to think downstream."</i></p> <p><i>"I will say to somebody that never volunteers I need you to help someone else with this. So I kind of push them into this role just to get them involved."</i></p>

Citizenship management: Support ideas for improvement	<p><i>"Yes, if it's a good idea and something worth exploring and considering, then I ask them to either bring it up during a meeting, or if they're not comfortable with that bring it just directly to me"</i></p> <p><i>"When they come to me with an idea, I tell them run with it, just run with it and do it."</i></p> <p><i>"Participation. You get everybody involved and you get everybody to collaborate on a process and basically they are making it their own"</i></p>
Citizenship management: Fostering 'fun' climate	<p><i>"she will volunteer to do everything for like any kind of luncheon, or party or anything like that, she loves to be that person so she will jump on anything... I totally encourage anything like that because I think that is so important in this company"</i></p>
Citizenship management: Ad hoc groups for initiatives	<p><i>"... we need to figure out how are we going to make this work, and I try to bring in and that's always been my style is to bring in people."</i></p>
Citizenship management: Respect recognition and rewards	<p><i>"Well in the daily meeting that I have that's where I would bring that up and I would clearly point out that employee, what that employee did and what it meant to the company, to try and bring the others around."</i></p> <p><i>"[What works for me is] to say positive reinforcement, thank you, thanks for your help, really looks good, you did a good job here, what have you"</i></p> <p><i>"I think when they hear their name and feel that they are being recognized for going that above and beyond, and says, the next time, I'm going to go above beyond because it felt good last time"</i></p>
Variation in levels of Citizenship	<p><i>"A lot of people as you know, they will just they work a job as a job. They come in work their eight hours and they're done with it. [Yeah] And what we try to look for as a manager is always try to look for the people that want to go above and beyond."</i></p> <p><i>"there are people who will absolutely just get up and go and help you, or if they see something that needs to be done, just do it, and then there are people in this branch who will say, that's not my job"</i></p>
Communication: Big picture, strategy	<p><i>"I think you have to explain a little more than that. Show them the whole picture, you don't have to get into financial but here is the goal of the company"</i></p> <p><i>"sharing as much information that's not privileged and to let everybody get excited and understand that the bigger goal is a great thing."</i></p> <p><i>"The more we can filter down to everybody ... you know making sure they have the right information, here is what we are trying to accomplish on a grand scale versus hearing things second third, fourth fifth nature"</i></p>
Communication: changes	<p><i>"Like we said, okay, we are going to do an IPO sometime ... last year we were talking about this and we had a change in management. Well, we really haven't communicated to people since then and so I'll occasionally hear people say so, are we still doing this IPO"</i></p> <p><i>"[about a change] now looking back at that time when it was happening there was confusion. There was mass confusion, and you know like I said we are lucky, because we can treat it indifferent because we've seen so much, but in a situation like that you feel abandoned again. I use the same word and you know that it's a bad feeling."</i></p>
Communications: Intra team relationships	<p><i>"We communicate well in our branch, we really do, we don't hesitate to... we just discuss a lot, we teach and we discuss."</i></p> <p><i>"I have a meeting with my staff once every two weeks. I do that on purpose to get a pulse for what, you know, what peoples thoughts and their feelings are and if they have disagreements or whatever or something is bothering them I... you know, I say, this is an open door policy, just say it just say it, don't... what I hate and I don't like is those that keep it inside of them and they never say anything and then one day they just blow up and say "Screw this I quit, I am walking out the door."</i></p>

Communications: Trust, confidentiality	<p><i>"we had a CEO that came in... and yeah he was like an iron first, and he didn't make too many... people happy... he was here a couple of years I think and they let him go"</i></p> <p><i>"It's not that I don't believe you but I have been with this company so long and I've done a lot of different surveys, where they say are very confidential, and yet they know exactly who or what I said and when I said it so ..."</i></p> <p><i>"it's important that communication flow freely within my group and that folks are able to do so, the first key word that comes to mind is trust. Without trust, communication will stop"</i></p>
Disengagement Signs	<p><i>"They're usually upset about the changes that are going on, that are...what it is."</i></p> <p><i>"If they feel like the company could care less whether they put a lot of effort in, you're not going to get a lot more out of them"</i></p> <p><i>"I could tell from him walking across the parking lot, if he was going to be a go getter and help us get it done, or was he just going to slide along and just work at a snail's pace, just by his gait, now there is nothing scientific about that, there is probably nothing fair about that"</i></p> <p><i>"you know even if I sit down and I talk to her about it, I don't see her taking on the initiative to... all she does is pass it off to somebody else..."</i></p>
Disengagement management	<p><i>"You try your best to try to coach through that and work with them see if there is something else they want to do..."</i></p> <p><i>"usually it has to be started based on what his actions were... Try to dig down see what's going on with him, why he is like this and hopefully you can resolve it"</i></p> <p><i>"I mean you want to give the employee the opportunity to be successful some need more help than others and some of them you got just coach more until they get it."</i></p>
Feedback formal reviews	<p><i>"It's usually just informational or negative, what we try to do is focus on the positives too. So it's highlighting some of the things that have been achieved whether big or small"</i></p> <p><i>[on motivation]" First of all it's they want to get good feedback, performance feedback from the supervisor"</i></p>
Feedback informal, coaching	<p><i>"you bring them in and say look we have this issue, here's the problem, give me your feedback, let's figure out how..."</i></p> <p><i>"my solution is let's do it for these two weeks or whatever and come back let's do it and let's have some feedback and see what we can do to change that so and that is a big piece of it"</i></p>
Recruitment aims	<p><i>"you try to see how motivated they are, their past history and recruiting them but a lot of times you don't tell until you actually get them in here and they start working and performing"</i></p> <p><i>"I look for somebody that doesn't want this job, they want the next job you know"</i></p> <p><i>"I need somebody that's going to be willing to interact with everybody in the group and be willing to pitch in if they need to."</i></p>
Recruitment techniques, tips	<p><i>"...making sure that they'd have a positive attitude to begin with, but then stressing it once they came"</i></p> <p><i>"I look for longevity in a job, no gaps, and then how they progress during that job"</i></p> <p><i>"...when you're explaining something to them they are going to get excited..."</i></p>
Other issues: Communication from centre	<p><i>"yeah like when someone from corporate comes down here and doesn't speak to them like at all, they are in my office like the next day going I don't understand this you know and, and like what's that person's problem?"</i></p> <p><i>"...that's where that communication can trickle down to everybody else so it's up to us after the call to them disseminate it amongst our teams."</i></p> <p><i>"... again in '08 a new regime came in and then that fuzzy warm feeling hasn't really come back, because we've changed management, I don't know how many times since then two, three times maybe."</i></p> <p><i>"People want to be, you know, they are going to care for a company that they believe cares for them. And I think they felt through a lot of it, they were so resentful of how that operated, but they are not fully out of that mode even though none of the new management I see is like that. They still feel that's the way it is, because that's the way it was, but none of those people are here anymore"</i></p>

<p>Other issues: Team building activity, social</p>	<p><i>"I mean we pretty do much everything we can to not have those cliques, not have that, those people on the other side not fit into the group"</i></p> <p><i>"...are just not socializing as much. And you need a little bit of socializing. You could definitely see you know everybody was like excited and they are like oh we can't wait for next year. So I do find that that's important."</i></p> <p><i>"when the [ex-]CEO cancels the goddamn Christmas parties which is retarded because it cost, it cost a 1000 or a 2000 bucks so I have a 20 30 people over at [X or Y] for Christmas parties."</i></p>
<p>Other issues: Training</p>	<p><i>"I needed to replace myself and I wanted to do it within the company. And we had no program set up for it to find out who would even want to move. And I found that very disturbing"</i></p> <p><i>"the attrition in this company has gotten a lot worse in the last few years and the newer people that come in ... and there's a definite disconnect when our training department went away you know part of the Lean process, and now there's people ... aren't getting the proper training"</i></p>

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